"Charge It"

IRVING BACHELLER

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"SHE WISHED ME TO SUGGEST SOMETHING FOR HER TO DO"

"CHARGE IT"

OR

KEEPING UP WITH HARRY

A story of fashionable extravagance and of the successful efforts to restrain it made by The Honorable Socrates Potter the genial friend of Lizzie

BY

IRVING BACHELLER

ILLUSTRATED

HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
MCMXII

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
PUBLISHED SEPTEMBER, 1912

H-M

TO MY DEAR FRIEND

LEDYARD PARK HALE

ANOTHER HONEST LAWYER

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FOREWORD

It may interest, if it does not comfort, the reader to know that this little story is built upon facts. The ride of Harry, the hundred-dollar pimple, the psychological hair, the downfall of Roger, all happened, while the Bishop's Head is one of the possessions of a New England family.

I. B.

"CHARGE IT"

I

IN WHICH HARRY SWIFTLY PASSES FROM ONE STAGE OF HIS CAREER TO ANOTHER

"HARRY and I were waiting for his motor-car," said the Honorable Socrates Potter. "He couldn't stand and wait—that would be losing time—so we kept busy. Went into the stores and bought things—violets, candy, golf-balls, tennis-shoes, new gloves, and neckties. Harry didn't need 'em, but he couldn't waste any time and—

"'There's the car!'

"In each store Harry had used the magic words, 'Charge it,' and passed on.

"We were going over to Chesterville to settle with the contractor who had built his father's house. We had an hour and four minutes in which to do it all, and then—the 6.03 express for New York. Harry had to get it to be in time for a bridge party.

"We climbed in. Harry grabbed the wheel. The gas-lever purred, the gears clicked, the car jumped into motion and rushed, screeching, up the hill ahead of us, shot between a trolley-car and a wagon, swung around a noisy runabout, scared a team into the siding, and sped away.

"The town behind us! Country-houses on either side! A bull-dog in the near perspective! He set himself, made a rush at us, as if trying to grab a wheel off the car, and the wheel got him. We flushed a lot of chickens. The air seemed to be full of them. Harry waved an apology to the farmer, as if to say:

"'Never mind, sir, I'm in a hurry now. Take my number and charge it.'

"'He struck a fowl, and, turning, I saw a whirl of feathers in the air behind us and the farmer's fist waving above the dust.

"Harry would have paid for the dog and the fowl in money but not in time—not even in a second of time! Harry had an engagement for a bridge party and must catch the 6.03 express.

"A man on a bicycle followed by a big greyhound was just ahead. We screeched. The man went into the ditch and took a header. The greyhound didn't have time to turn out then. He bent to the oars until he had gained lead enough to save himself with a sidelong jump into the buttercups.

"'Charge it!'

"The needle on the speedometer wavered from fifty to fifty-five, then struck at sixty, held a second there, and passed it. Gnats and flies hit my face and stung like flying shot. The top of the road went up in a swirl of dust behind us. I hung on, with

my life in my trembling hands. We zipped past teams and motor-cars.

"We filled every eye with dust and every ear with screeches and every heart with a swift pang of terror.

"'Charge it!'

"A rider with a frightened horse raced on ahead of us to the next corner. We sped across the track into Chesterville and—

"'Hold up! There's the office ahead.'

"The levers move, down goes the brake, and we're there.

"'Eleven miles in fourteen minutes!' Harry exclaims, as I spring out and hurry to the door. It was really sixteen minutes, but I always allow Harry a slight discount.

"'Not in!' I shout, in a second.

"'Not in—heart of Allah!—where is he?'

"'At the Wilton job on the point.'

"'We'll go get him.'

"'You go; I'll wait here.'

"Away he rushes—I thank God for the

brief respite. This high power encourages great familiarity with the higher powers. But the Creator's name is used here in no light or profane spirit, let me say. In each case it is only a brief prayer or, rather, the beginning of a prayer which one has not time to finish. It is cut short by a new adventure.

"I say to myself that I shall not ride back with Harry. No, life is still dear to me. I will take the trolley. And yet—what thrilling, Jove-like, superhuman devil-try it was! I light a cigar and sit down. Harry and Wilton arrive. Fifteen minutes gone!

"I get down to business.

"Harry says: 'Please cut it short.'

"I could have saved five hundred dollars if I had had time to present our side of the case with proper deliberation. But Harry keeps shouting:

"'Do cut it short. I *must* get there—don't you know?'

"Wilton must have his pay, too—he needs every cent of it to-morrow.

"'You go on. I'll stay here and settle this matter and go home by the trolley.'

"'Let's stick together,' my young friend entreats. 'Please hurry it through and come on with me. I need you.'

"Harry must have company. His time is wasted unless he has a spectator—an audience—a witness—a historian. Without that, all his hair-breadth escapes would be thrown away. His stories would hang by a thread.

"'We've only twenty-one minutes,' he calls.

"I say to myself: 'Damn the man whose money is like water and whose time is more precious than the last hour of Mahomet.' Well, of course, there was plenty of money, but the supply of time was limited. To waste a second was to lose an opportunity for self-indulgence.

"I draw a check and take a hurried receipt and jump in.

"Away we go. 'Look out!'

"The brakes grind, and we rise in the air a little as a small boy crosses our bows. We just missed him—thank God!

"'Don't be reckless, old man—go a bit slower.'

"'It's all right. We've a clear road now.'

"What a wind in our faces! There's the track ahead.

"'*Look out! The train! God Almighty!*'

"I spoke too late. We were almost up to the rails when I saw it. We couldn't stop. Cleared the track in time. Felt the wind of the engine in my back hair, and then my scalp moved. Just ahead was a light buggy in the middle of the road and a bull, frightened by the cars, galloping beside it.

"In the excitement Harry hadn't time to blow, and the roar of the train had covered our noise. The bull turned into the ditch and speeded up. We swerved between bull and buggy and grazed the side of the latter.

I jumped and landed on the bull, and that saved me. It's the first time that I ever knocked a bull down. He got to his feet swiftly beside me, bellowed, and took the fence. He was a fat, well-fed bull with a big, round, soft side on him. I never knew that a bull was so mellow. My feet sank deep, and he gave way, and I hit him again with another part of my person. I didn't mean it, and felt for him, although it is likely that his feelings needed no further help from me. Of course I bounded off him at last and the earth hit me a hard upper-cut, but the bull had been a highly successful shock absorber. In a second or so I was able to get up and look around. The buggy had gone over, and the horse was on his hind legs trying to climb out of the dust-cloud.

"Harry stopped his car and began to back up.

"'That'll do for me,' I said. 'I don't sit in your padded cell any longer.'

"I had lived a whole three-volume novel in the last forty minutes. The Panama Canal had been finished and England had become a republic. It was too much.

"We found two men—one at the head of the frightened horse, the other lying beside the wrecked buggy with a broken leg.

"And Harry had an engagement to play bridge!

"I took the horse's head. The well man pulled a stake off the fence and chased Harry around the motor-car. He didn't intend to 'charge it.' Wanted cash down. I got hold of his arm and succeeded in calming him.

"Harry apologized and assured them that he was willing to pay the damage. We picked up the injured man and took him to his home. On the way Harry explained that they should keep track of all expenses and:

"'Charge it.'

"In a few minutes Harry roared off in

the direction of Pointview to get a doctor and the 6.03 express.

"'It might be a little late,' he said, as he left us.

"The next day Harry was arrested as a public enemy for criminal carelessness. He had injured three men on the highways of Connecticut, to say nothing of dogs and poultry. Almost everybody had something charged against Harry. He was highly unpopular, but a good fellow at heart.

"I got the judge to release him on his promise to abandon motoring for three years.

"Thus he rushed out of the motor-car stage of his career into that of the drag and tandem.

"He had had more narrow escapes and suffered greater perils than Rob Roy.

"Yes, bulls are a good thing—a comparatively soft thing. I recommend them to every motorist who may have to look for a place to land. Don't ever throw yourself on the real estate of New England. It can hit harder than you can."

II

WHICH BEGINS THE STORY OF THE BISHOP'S HEAD

"HARRY is the most modern character in my little museum," said the Honorable Socrates Potter, as I sat with him in his cozy office. "I was really introduced to Harry by the Bishop of St. Clare, who died in 1712. I didn't know his heart until the Bishop made us acquainted. Strange! Well, that depends on the point of view. You see, the Bishop was acquired and imported as an ancestor by one of the best families, and that's how I happened to meet him. They would have got William the Conqueror—of England and Fifth Avenue—if he hadn't been well hidden.

"I am inclined to converse long and loudly on the reconstruction of Pointview. Of course I shall talk too much, but I am a licensed liar, and the number of my machine is 4227643720, so if I smash a dog here and there, make a note of the number and charge it. I'm going fast and shall not have time to stop for apologies.

"In Pointview even Time has quickened his pace. Last year is ancient history. Lizzie has been succeeded by Miss Elizabeth, who needs a maid, a chauffeur, a footman, and a house-party to maintain her spirits. Harry and his drag have taken the place of Dan and his runabout.

"The enemy has arrived in force. We are surrounded by country-houses and city abdomens of appalling size and arrogance. Mansions crown the slopes and line the water-front. The dialect of the lazy Yankee and his industrious hens are heard no more in the hills of Pointview. Where the hoe and the sickle were stirred by the

fear of hunger the golf-club and the tennis-racket are moved by the fear of fat. The sweat of toil is now the perspiration of exercise. The chatter of society has succeeded that of the goose and the polliwog. Land has gone up. Rocks have become real estate even while they belonged to Christian Scientists. Ledges, smitten by the modern Moses, have gushed a stream of gold. Once the land supported its owner. Now wealth supports land and landlord and the fullness thereof. The Fifth Avenue farmer has begun to raise his own vegetables at a dollar apiece and a crop of criminals second to none. In his hands farming becomes wagriculture and the farm a swarming nest of parasites.

"We are in the midst of a new migration from the cities back to the land, and all are happy save the philosophers. It is a remote reaction of former migrations to the mines and the oil-fields. The descendants of these very pioneers now seek to exchange

a part of their gold for the ancient sod in which are the roots of their family trees and delusions.

"With these rich men came Henry Delance, who grew up with me here and went to Pittsburg in his early twenties and made a fortune in the coal and iron business. His grandfather was old Nick Delance, a blacksmith; and his father owned a farm on the hills and made a bare living for himself and a large family. They had been simple, hard working, honest people. I helped Henry to buy the old place, and, as we stood together on the hilltop, he said to me:

"'I often think of the old days that were full of hard labor. What a woman my mother was! Did all the work of the house and raised seven boys and two girls, and every one of them has had some success in the world—except me. One built a big railroad, one was governor of a State, one a member of Congress, one a noted phy-

sician, two have made millions, and both of the girls married well. Now, my boy has had every advantage—'

"'But poverty,' I suggested.

"'But poverty,' he repeated, 'and I'm unable to give him that. It's probably the one thing that would make a man of him, and I wouldn't wonder if he succeeded in achieving it.'

"'A rather large undertaking,' I said.

"'Yes, but he's well qualified,' Henry answered, with a smile.

"'What's the matter with your boy?' I asked.

"'So busy with tomfoolery—no time for anything else. I've had so much to do that I've rather neglected Harry, and now he's too much for me. He knows that he's got me beat on education, but that's only the beginning of what he knows. Good fellow, you understand, but he's young and thinks me old-fashioned. I wish you'd help me to make a man of him.'

"'What can I do?'

"'Get him interested in some kind of work. He doesn't like my business. He hates Wall Street, and, knowing it as I do, how can I blame the boy? He doesn't take to the law—'

"'And, knowing it as I do, how can *I* blame him?' I interrupted.

"'But, somehow, he hasn't the spring in his bow that I had—the get-up-and-get—the disposition to move all hell if necessary.'

"'You can't expect it,' I said. 'His mainspring is broken.'

"'What would you call his mainspring?' he asked.

"'The desire to win money and its power. Mind you, I wouldn't call that a high motive, but in a young man it's a kind of a mainspring that sets him a-going and keeps the works busy until he can get better motive power. In Harry it's broken.'

"'You're right—it was busted long ago,' said Henry Delance.

"'Some one has got to contrive a new mainspring for the sons of millionaires—they're so plenty these days.'

"'There's the desire to be respectable,' he suggested.

"'But it is not nearly so universal as the love of money. If it were possible to have millionaire carpenters and shoemakers there'd be more hope! But I'll try to invent a mainspring for Harry. If he doesn't marry some fool woman there's a chance for the boy—a good chance. Tell me all about him.'

"In his own way, which amused me a little, the old man sketched the character of his son, or rather confessed it.

"'A kind of Alexander the Great,' he said. 'We shall have to be careful or lose our heads. Surfeited with power, you know. When he wants anything he goes to a store and says, "Charge it." That has ruined him. He's no scale of values in his mind.'

"He told me, then, with some evidence

of alarm, that Harry had become interested in a fool woman, older than he, noted for her beauty and equestrian skill—by name Mrs. Revere-Chalmers, of a well-known Southern family. I knew the woman—divorced from a rich old gentleman of great generosity, who had taken all the blame for her sake. But I happened to know that the circumstances on her side were not creditable. The truth, however, had been well concealed.

"In her youth Frances Revere had two beautiful parents. In fact, they were all that any girl could desire—obedient and respectful to their youngers. She was always kind to them and kept them looking neatly and helped them in their lessons and brought them up in the fear of Tiffany and the hope of future happiness. They played most of the time, but never chased each other in and out of the bedrooms or made any noise about the house when she lay sleeping in the forenoon. Their sense

of chivalry would not have permitted it. When she arose she called them to her and patted their heads and said: 'What dear parents I have!' It might be thought that the fair Frances led an aimless and idle life. Not so. The young lady was very busy and never forgot her aim. She was preparing herself to be a marryer of men and the leading marryer in the proud city of her birth. Every member of the household became her assistant in this noble industry. Many storekeepers had unconsciously joined her staff and 'charged it' until they were weary. All her papa's money had been invested in the business, and he began to borrow for a rainy day. Then there came a long spell of wet weather. At last something had to be done. Frances began to use her talents. No prince or noble duke had come for her, so she married an old man worth ten million dollars and sent her parents to an orphan asylum with a fair allowance of spending-money. They

are her only heirs, and now, at thirty, but with ample capital, she has set up again in the marrying business.

"She lives in a big country-house, and has a lot of cats and dogs that are shampooed every day. Her life is pretty much devoted to the regulation of hair. Her own requires the exclusive attention of a hired girl. Its tint, luster, and general effect show excellent taste and close application. Considering its area, her scalp is the most remarkable field of industry in Connecticut. Has herself made into a kind of life-sized portrait every day and carefully framed and lighted and hung. It is a beautiful portrait, but it is not a portrait of her.

"Her life is arduous. I have some reason to think that it wearies her. She rings for the masseuse at 10.30 A.M. and breakfasts in bed at twelve o'clock. Soon after that the chiropodist and the manicure and the hair-dresser begin to saw wood;

then the grooms and second footmen. At two o'clock she goes out to pat the head of the ten-thousand-dollar bull and give some sugar to the horses, all of whom have been prepared for this ordeal by bathing and massage.

"It's great to be able to pat the head of a ten-thousand-dollar bull. It's a pretty vanity. All the Fifth Avenue farmers indulge in it. Some slap them on the back and some poke them in the ribs with the point of a parasol, but the correct thing is to pat them on the head and say: Dear old Romeo!

"After a turn in the saddle Mrs. Revere-Chalmers led society until midnight. With her a new spirit had arrived in the ancient stronghold of the Yankee.

"I began to learn things about Harry—a big, blond, handsome youth who had traveled much. He had been to school in New York, London, Florence, and Paris, and had graduated from Harvard. For a time he called it Hahvud, but passed that trouble

without serious injury and put it behind him. In the European stage of his career he had been attacked by lions, griffins, and battle-axes and had lost some of his red blood. There he had acquired a full line of Fifth Avenue dialect and conversation with trills and grace notes from France and Italy. He had been slowly recovering from that trouble for a year or so when I met him. Now and then a good, strong, native idiom burst out in his conversation.

"Harry was a man without a country, having never had a fair chance to acquire one. He had touched many high and low places—from the top of the Eiffel Tower to the lowest depths of the underworld. Also, he knew the best hotels in Europe and eastern America, and the Duke of Sutherland and the Lord Mayor of London, and Jack Johnson, the pugilist. Harry knew only the upper and lower ends of life.

"He was an extremist. Also, he was a prolific and generous liar. He lied not to

deceive, but to entertain. There was a kind of noble charity in his lying. He would gladly perjure his soul to speed an hour for any good friend. His was the fictional imagination largely exercised in the cause of human happiness. Now and then he became the hero of his own lies, but he was generally willing to divide the honors. His friends knew not when to believe him, and he often deceived them when he was telling the truth.

"Early in April, Henry Delance came to me and said: 'Soc, you've been working hard for years, and you need a rest. Let's get aboard the next steamer and spend a fortnight in England.'

"I had little taste for foreign travel, but Betsey urged me to go, and I went with Henry and his wife, their daughter Ruth and the boy Harry, and sundry maids and valets. We had been a week in London, when Henry and the Mrs. came into my room one day, aglow with excite-

ment. Mrs. Delance was first to address me.

"'Mr. Potter, congratulate us,' said she. 'We find that Henry is a lineal descendant of William the Conqueror.'

"'Henry, it is possible that William could prove an alibi, or maybe you could,' I suggested.

"'I'd make an effort,' said he, with a trace of embarrassment, 'but my wife thinks that we had better plead guilty and let it go. That kind of thing doesn't interest me so much as it does her.'

"'After all,' I answered, by way of consolation, 'if you think it's like to do you any harm, it doesn't need to get out. I shall respect your confidence.'

"'Too late!' his wife exclaimed. 'The facts have been cabled to America.'

"I was writing letters in my room, next day, when Harry interrupted me with a hurried entrance. He locked the door inside, and in a kind of playful silence

drew from under his rain-coat, and deposited on my table, a human skull.

"'The Bishop of St. Clare,' he whispered, in that curious dialect which I shall not try to imitate.

"'He isn't looking very well,' I said, not knowing what he meant.

"'This is the Bishop's head—the Bishop of St. Clare,' Harry whispered again. 'He was one of our ancestors—by Jove!'

"'Is that all that was the matter with him?' I asked.

"'No; his epitaph says that he died of a fever in 1712.'

"'How did you get hold of his head?' I asked. 'Win it in a raffle?'

"'I bribed the old verger in the crypt of St. Mary's. Offered him two sovereigns to lift the stone lid and let me look in. He said he couldn't do that, but discreetly withdrew when I put the money in his hand. It was up to me, don't you know, and here is the Bishop's head.'

"'Going to have him photographed in a group of the family?' I asked.

"'No, but you see Materna paid two pounds for a chunk off a tombstone, and I thought I would give her a souvenir worth having,' said he, and blushed for the first time since our interview had begun. 'This is unique.'

"'And you didn't think the Bishop would miss it?' I suggested.

"'Not seriously,' he answered. 'I guess it's a fool thing to have done, but I thought that I could have some fun with the Bishop's head. Mother is going to round up all the Delances at Christmas for a big dinner—uncles, aunts, and cousins, you know—a celebration of our genealogical discoveries with a great family tree in the center of the table. The history of the Delances will be read, and I thought that I would spring a surprise—tell them that I had invited our old ancestor, Sir Robert Delance, Bishop of St. Clare; that, con-

trary to my hope, he had accepted, and that I would presently introduce him. In due time I would produce the head and read from his life and writings, which I bought in a London book-stall. Finally, I thought that I would have him tell how he happened to be present. Don't you think he would make a hit?'

"'He would surely make a hit—a resounding hit,' I said, 'but not as a proof of respectability. Even if the Bishop is your ancestor, you have no good title to his bones. I presume that every visitor to the old church puts his name and address in a register?'

"'Yes.'

"'Well, suppose the theft is discovered and the verger gives you away. All the money you've got wouldn't keep you out of prison.'

"Harry began to turn pale. He was a good fellow, but this genealogical frenzy had turned his head, and his head was not as old as the Bishop's. It was unduly young.

"'Assume that you get home with your prize, the Bishop's head would be the worst enemy that his descendants ever had. It would always accuse you and grin at your follies. And would you dare proclaim the truth over in Pointview that you really have the skull of the Bishop of St. Clare?'

"The boy was scared. He had suddenly discovered an important fact. It was the north pole of his education.

"'By Jove! I'm an ass,' he said. 'What shall I do with it?'

"'Say nothing of the thing to anybody, not even to your father, and get rid of it.'

"'That's what I'll do,' he said, as he wrapped the skull in a piece of newspaper, hid it under his coat, and left me.

"We sailed next afternoon, and that evening, when Harry and I sat alone in a corner of the deck, I asked him what he had done with the Bishop's head.

"'Tried to get rid of it, but couldn't,' he said. 'My conscience smote me, and I

took the old bone back to St. Mary's. Going to do my duty like a man, you see, but it wouldn't work. New verger on the job! I weakened. Then I put it in a box and had it addressed to a fictitious man in Bristol, and sent my valet to get it off by express. It went on, and was returned for a better address. You see, my valet—officious ass!—had left his address at the express office. How *gauche* of him! While we were lying at the dock a messenger came to my state-room with the Bishop's head. I had to take it and pay five shillings and a sixpence for the privilege.'

"'The old Bishop seems to be quite attached to his new relative,' I said.

"'Yes, but when the deck is deserted, by and by, I'm going to drop him overboard.'

"And that is what he did—dropped it, solemnly, from the ship's side at dinner-time, and I witnessed the proceeding.

"The adventure had one result that was rather curious and unexpected. It brought

Harry close to me and established our relations to each other. That they admitted me to his confidence as a friend and counselor of the utmost frankness was on the whole exceedingly fortunate. From that time he began to trust me and to distrust himself.

"So it happened that I was really introduced to Harry by the Bishop of St. Clare, who died in 1712, and those credentials gave me a standing which I could not otherwise have enjoyed.

"Coming home, I limbered up my imagination and outlied Harry.

"I was forced to invent that cheerful, handy liar the late Dr. Godfrey Vogeldam Guph, Professor of the Romance Languages in the University of Brague and the intimate friend of any great man you may be pleased to mention. With his help I have laid low even the most authoritative, learned, and precise liars in the State of Connecticut. I do it by quoting from his memoirs.

"Harry's specialty were lies of adventure in court and palace, and, as Dr. Guph had known all the crowned heads, he became an ever-present help in time of trouble.

"Every lie of Harry's I outdid with another of ampler proportions. He put on a little more steam, but I kept abreast or a length ahead of him. By and by he broke down and begged for quarter.

"'On my word as a gentleman,' said he, 'that last story I told was true. It really happened, don't you know?'

"'Well, Harry, if you will only notify me when you propose to tell the truth, I shall be glad to take your word for it,' was my answer.

"'And keep Dr. Guph chained,' said he.

"'Exactly, and give you like warning when I have a lie ready to launch.'

"'That's a fair treaty,' he agreed.

"'And a good idea,' I said. 'As a liar of long experience I have found it best to notify all comers what to expect of me when I see a useful lie in the offing. That has

enabled me to give my fancy full play without impairing my reputation. My noblest faculties have had ample exercise while my word has remained at par.'

"We made an agreement along that line, and Harry ceased to be a liar, and became a story-teller of much humor and ingenuity."

III

WHICH IS THE STORY OF THE PIMPLED QUEEN AND THE BLACK SPOT

"WELL, on our return, Mrs. Delance had a helmet and a battle-ax, with sundry accessories, emblazoned on her letter-heads and the doors of her limousine. Here was another case of charge it, but this time it was charged against her slender capital of good sense. Mrs. Delance was a stout lady of the Dreadnought type. Harry settled down in the home of his father and began to study the 'middle clahsses' with a drag and tandem and garments for every kind of leisure. The girls went to ride with him, and naturally began to smarten their dress and accents and to change their estimates. His 'aristocratic' friends and man-

ners were much in their company and ever in their dreams.

"Of course, all that began to react on the young men: if that was the kind of thing the girls liked, they must try to be in it. Slowly but surely a Pointview aristocracy began its line of cleavage and a process of integration. Crests appeared on the letter-heads and limousine doors of the newly rich. In a month or so people of brain and substance degenerated into a condition of hardened shameless idiocy.

"Some of our best citizens went abroad, each to find his place among the descendants of William the Conqueror. Suddenly I discovered that the clerk in my office was ashamed to be seen on the street with a package in his hands.

"Our young men began to long for wealth and leisure. They grew impatient of the old process of thrift and industry. It was too slow. Many of them opened accounts in Wall Street.

"Young Roger Daniels had some luck there and began to advertise the fact with a small steam-yacht and a cruise. We were going as hard as ever to keep up, but on higher levels of aspiration. The girls were engaged in a strenuous contest for the prize of Harry's favor, with that handsome young *divorcée* well in the lead.

"Roger and his party were about to return from their cruise, and Harry was to give them a ball at the Yacht Club.

"The day before the ball our best-known physician came to see Mrs. Potter, who was ill, and cheered us up with a story. The Doctor was young, attractive, and able. He had threatened every appendix in Pointview, and had a lot of inside information about our men and women—especially the latter. He looked weary.

"'Yesterday was a little hard on me,' he said. 'It began at four in the morning with a confinement case and ended at one A.M. There were two operations at the

hospital, a steady stream at the office, and a twenty-mile ride over the hills. Got back in the evening pretty well worn out. Tumbled into bed at two minutes of eleven, and was asleep before the clock struck. The 'phone-bell at my bedside awoke me. I let it go on for a minute. Hadn't energy enough to get up. It rang and rang. Out I tumbled.

"'Hello!' I said.

"'A voice answered. "I am Mrs. So-and-So's butler," it said. "She wishes to see you as soon as you can get here. It's very urgent."

"""What's the matter?"

"""Don't know, sir, but it is serious."

"""All right," I said.

"'My chauffeur was off for the night, so I 'phoned to the stable and got Patrick and told him to hitch up the black mare at once, dressed, and took everything that I was likely to need in an emergency, got into the wagon, and hurried away in the

darkness. After all, I thought, it is something to have one's skill so much in request by the rich and the powerful. It was a long ride with one horse-power, but we got there.

"'Many windows of the great house were aglow. The first butler met me in the hall and took me to my lady's chamber—an immense room finished in the style of the First Empire. She was half reclining and playing solitaire as she smoked a cigarette on a divan that occupied a dais overhung with rare tapestries on a side of the room. The effect of the whole thing was queenly—*à la* Récamier. She greeted me wearily and without rising.

"'"Sit down," said she, and I did so.

"'She turned to a good-looking maid who timidly stood near the divan.

"'"My dear little woman, you weary me—please go," she said.

"'The maid went.

"'"Dawctah," the lady said to me, "I

have a nahsty little pimple on my right cheek, and I really cahn't go to the ball, you know, unless it is cuahed. Won't you kindly—ah—see what can be done?"

"'"A pimple! God prosper it!" I said to myself. "Has the great M.D. become a P.D.—a mere doctor of pimples?"

"'I inspected the pimple—a very slight affair.

"'"Why, if I were you, I'd just cover the pimple with a little square of court plaster," I said. "It would become you."

"'"What a pretty idea! That's just what I will do," she exclaimed.

"'"Please charge it, Dawctah," she said, wearily, as she resumed her solitaire.

"'I charged a hundred dollars, but nothing could pay me for the humiliation I suffered. Going home, I pounded the mare shamefully.'

"'You charged a good price,' I said.

"'Yes; but it's like pulling teeth to get any money out of her. One has to earn it

twice. Worth a million, and hangs everybody up. Some have to sue.'

"'Does nothing to-day that can be done to-morrow,' I said.

"'True,' said he; 'she don't look after her business, and thinks that every one is trying to cheat her.'

"'Same old story,' was my remark. 'I was her husband's lawyer. "Well, dear, how much do you suppose McCrory's bill is for the last month?" he would ask her. She would look thoughtful and say: "Oh, about fifteen hundred dollars." "My dear, he would go on, "it is ten thousand six hundred and forty-three dollars and twenty-four cents." "Oh, that's impossible," she would answer. "There's some mistake about it. I'll never O.K. such a bill. It's an outrage!" But the bill was always right.'

"'I didn't suppose you would know the lady—I haven't mentioned her name,' said the Doctor.

"'I know her, but don't worry—I shall not betray your confidence. I knew her husband. It wore him out looking after the charge-it department. Now she's trying to get Harry Delance for his job.'

"'She's badly in need of a clerk,' said the Doctor, 'and I hope she gets one. He could look after the pimples as well as I can.'

"Many were getting ready for the ball, but this lady was the only one I knew of who had spent a hundred dollars for facial improvement. Harry, however, was about to spend a thousand dollars for the improvement of his conscience. It was one of the necessary expenses and it came about in this way:

"The day of the ball had arrived. Harry came to see me about noon. He said that he had been busy all the morning with preparations for the ball, but—

"He showed me a telegram. It was from Roger Daniels, and it said:

"'The recent slump in the market has put

me in hell's hole. Please wire one thousand dollars to Bridgeport, where I am hung up. If you do, I shall give you good collateral and eternal gratitude. If you don't, we shall have to miss the ball. Please remember that I am waiting at the other end of the wire like a hungry cat at a mouse-hole.'

"Harry looked worried. The ball must come off, and, without Roger, it would be like Hamlet minus the melancholy Dane. It was a special compliment to Roger.

"'What do you advise me to do?' he asked.

"'Pay it.'

"'It will probably be a dead loss.'

"'Probably, but it's plainly up to you. He's got in trouble keeping your pace. To tell the honest truth, you're responsible for it, and the public will charge it to your account. You must pay the bill or suffer moral bankruptcy.'

"Harry was taken by surprise.

"'But I can pay for *my* folly,' he said.

"'Yes; but when it becomes another man's

folly it's stolen property, and as much yours as ever. The goods have your mark on 'em, and, by and by, they're dumped at your door. They may be damaged by dirt and vermin, but you've got to take 'em.

"'After all, Harry, why should a young man whose education has cost a hundred thousand dollars, if a cent, be giving up his life to folly? You're too smart to spend the most of your time looking beautiful—trying to excite the admiration of women and the envy of men. That might do in some of the old countries where the people are as dumb as cattle and are capable only of the emotion of awe and need professional gentlemen to excite it, and to feed upon their substance. Here the people have their moments of weakness, but mostly they are pretty level-headed. They judge men by what they do, not by what they look like. The professional gentleman is first an object of curiosity and then an object of scorn. He's not for us. Young man, I knew your

father and your grandfather. I like you and want you to know that I am speaking kindly, but you ought to go to work.'

"'Mr. Potter, he said, 'upon my word, sir, I'm going to work one of these days—at something—I don't know what.'

"'The sooner the better,' I said. 'Work is the thing that makes men—nothing else. In Pointview everybody used to work. Now here are some facts for your genealogy that you haven't discovered. Your grandfather and grandmother raised a family of nine children and never had a servant—think of that. Your grandmother made clothes for the family and did all the work of the house. She was a doctor, a nurse, a teacher, a spinner, a weaver, a knitter, a sewer, a cook, a washerwoman, a gentle and tender mother. Now we are beginning to rot with idleness.

"'Let me tell you a story of a modern lady of Pointview.'

" Then I told him of the Doctor's call

on the pimpled queen at midnight, and added:

"'Think of that! Think of the fathomless depths of vanity and selfishness that lie under that pimple. It's a monument more sublime than the Matterhorn. Think of the poor fellow that has to marry that human millstone, and be the clerk of her charge-it department.'

"'I can think of no worse luck, really,' said he 'I wonder who it is!'

"'Doctors never give names,' I said. 'But you might look for the little black square of court-plaster.'

"'By Jove!' he exclaimed. 'I shall look with interest.'

"The ball came off, and Roger got there, and so did the lady and the square of black court-plaster; and that night Harry began a new stage in his career.

"After all, Harry was no dunce, but he was not yet convinced."

IV

IN WHICH SOCRATES ENCOUNTERS "NEW THOUGHT" AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HAIR

"WHEN people have little to do they go back to childishness. They long for novelty—new playthings, new adventures, new sensations, new friends. So our upper classes are utterly restless. Every old pleasure is a slough of despond. The ladies have tried jewels, laces, crests, titled husbands, divorces, gambling, cocktails, cigarettes, and other branches of exhilaration. They have passed through the slums of literature and of the East Side of Gotham. The gentlemen have shown them the way and smiled with amusement and gone on to greater triumphs. To these people

every old idea is 'bromide.' It bores them. They scoff at men 'who take themselves seriously.' In a word, Moses and the Prophets are so much 'dope.' And they are excellent people who really want to make the world better, but the childish craze for novelty is upon them. Mrs. Revere-Chalmers was one of this kind. Harry came to me next day at my house and said:

"'By Jove! you know, it was my friend Mrs. R.-C. who wore the black square. But she is really a charming woman—not at all a bad sort. I want you to know her better. She made me promise to bring you over to-morrow afternoon if you would come.'

"We went. It was a 'new-thought' tea—a deep, brain-racking, forefinger-on-the-brow function. You could see the thoughts of the ladies and sometimes hear them as a 'professor' with long hair and smiles of fathomless inspiration wrapped

himself in obscurity and called unto them out of the depths. He was all depth. They gazed at his soulful eyes and plunged into deep thought, catching at straws, and he returned to New York by the next train and probably made another payment, on account, to his landlady. Tea and conversation followed his departure.

"I had observed that Mrs. Revere-Chalmers had undergone a singular change of aspect, but failed to locate the point of difference until a sister had said to her in a tone of honeyed deviltry:

"'My dear, you are growing younger—quite surely younger, and your hair is so lovely and so—different! You know what I mean—it has the luster of youth, and the shade is adorable without a trace of gray in it.'

"This last phrase was the point of the dagger, and Mrs. Chalmers felt it. Sure enough, her hair had changed its hue, and was undeniably fuller and younger.

"Then our hostess gave out a confession which has made some history and is fully qualified to make more. It is a curious fact that one who is abnormal enough to commit a crime is apt to have poor caution.

"'I have been taking lessons of the Professor, and have produced this hair by concentration,' said she. 'It is a creation of the new thought and so wonderful I could almost forgive one for not believing me.'

"'A gem of thought—a hair poem!' I could not help exclaiming. 'Did it come all at once, in a flood of inspiration, or hair by hair?'

"'All at once,' she answered.

"I charged it and went on as if nothing great had happened.

"'Considered as a work of the imagination, it is wonderful, and should rank with the best of Shakespeare's,' I assured her. 'But it will subject you to unsuspected perils, for your footstool will be the shrine

of the hairless and you shall see the top of every bald head in America.'

"Another lady sprang to her assistance by telling how she had extracted a pearl necklace from an unwilling husband who had said that he couldn't afford it, by concentration. The new thought had fetched him.

"The noble unselfishness with which they had used this miraculous gift of the spirit appealed to Harry and to me.

"In that brilliant company was a slim woman of the armored cruiser type, who had come to Betsey one day and said:

"'You're spoiling your husband. You make too much of him. You don't seem to know how to manage a husband, and the husbands of Pointview are being ruined by your example. They expect too much of us. We women have got to stand together. Don't you read the *Female Gazette?*'

"'No—I have been waiting till I could get a rubber-plant and other accessories,' said Betsey.

"'Well, it may not be *en règle*, but it is full of good sense,' said the lady. 'I've brought an article with me that I wish you would read.'

"She left the article, and its title was 'How to Manage a Husband.' It averred that too much petting, too much indulgence, made a man selfish and conceited; that affection should be administered with scientific reserve. Men should be taught to wait on themselves, and all that.

"They called on me for remarks, and I said:

"'I am glad to have become acquainted with the power of concentration. I propose that we all quit work and begin to concentrate. Matter is only a creation of spirit. Let us exercise our several sovereign spirits and try to turn out a better line of matter. Let us have fewer rocks and stones and more comforts. Sweat and toil are a great mistake. Let us turn Delance's Hill into plum-pudding and

the stones thereof into caramels and its pond into tomato-soup. Why not? They have no reality, no substance. They are nothing but thoughts—and our thoughts, at that—and why shouldn't we change 'em? But somehow we can't fetch it. According to the Professor, we have got into the habit of thinking in terms of rock, soil, and water, and we can't get over it. There are some few of us who stand for better things; but the majority keep thinking in the old rut, and we can't sway them. The Professor says that all we need is to get together and agree and then concentrate. But agreement doesn't seem to be necessary. You know that there was a time when everybody, after much concentration, agreed that the world was flat—everybody but one man. Now the world was stubborn. It wouldn't give up. It hung on to its roundness, and let the people think what they pleased. They tried to flatten it with countless tons of concentration, but it

held its shape The one man had his way about it. So don't be discouraged by an adverse majority on this plum-pudding project. One lady has shown us a sample of concentrated hair, and it looks good to me. Why all this striving, all this trouble about the problems of life and death, when the straight, broad way of concentration is open to us? Why shouldn't we have concentrated bread and meat and shoes and socks and silks.

"'Now the subject of concentration is by no means new. It has been a success for centuries. The late Dr. Guph tells in his memoirs of a singular race of people known as the Flub Dubs who once dwelt on the lost isle of Atlantis. They were the greatest concentrators that ever lived. Every one thought that he was the greatest man in the world, and thought it so hard and so persistently that it came true—in a way. Naturally they aimed high, and every man thought himself the rightful king, and

a strife arose over the crown, so that no one could wear it and many were slain in a great tussle. And when they were resting from their struggles one rose and said: "Kings of the realm, you are as the dust under my feet. I scorn you. A few minutes ago I decided to reverse my concentrator and aim at a higher goal. It was easy of attainment. I have suddenly become the biggest fool on this island and the humblest of all men."

"'The announcement was greeted with great applause, and within three minutes his popularity had so enhanced that they put him on the throne. Such was the power of truth. And all confessed and joined his party, and he was known as the wisest king of the Flub Dubs.

"'The moral that Dr. Guph adduces is this: You cannot make figs out of thistles, and unregulated concentration leads to trouble.'

"Harry and I started for home in a deep silence.

"'Hell!' I exclaimed, presently.

"'And that reminds me that I feel like the king of the Flub Dubs,' said Harry.

"'Which indicates that you are likely to decline the office,' I remarked.

"'It's serious business—this matter of finding a wife,' he declared.

"'What's the matter with Marie Benson?' I asked. 'There's a real woman and the best-looking girl in Connecticut.'

"'Charming girl!' he exclaimed. 'But, dear boy! she talks too much.'

"'That is a fault that could be remedied; and, after all, it's a kind of generosity. It's the very opposite of concentration.'

"'Ah—if she would only reform!' he said.

"'Leave that to me,' I answered, as he dropped me at my door."

V

IN WHICH SOCRATES DISCUSSES THE OVER-PRODUCTION OF TALK

"MARIE was my ward, and as pretty a girl as ever led a bulldog or ate a box of chocolates at a sitting. She was a charming fish-hook, baited with beauty and wealth and culture and remarkable innocence. She had dangled about on mama's rod and line for a year or so, but the fish wouldn't bite. For that reason I grabbed the rod from the old lady and put on a bait of silence and a sinker, and moved to deep water and began to do business.

"Marie had a failing, for which, I am sorry to say, she was in no way distinguished. She talked too much, as Harry

had said. There are too many American women who talk too much. Marie's mother used to talk about six-thirds of the time. You had to hear it, and then you had to get over it. She had a way of spiking the shoes of Time so that every hour felt like a month while it was running over you. You ought to have seen her climb the family tree or the sturdy old chestnut of her own experience and shake down the fruit! Marie had one more tree in her orchard. She had added the spreading peach of a liberal education to the deadly upas of Benson genealogy and the sturdy old chestnut of mama's experience. The *vox Bensonorum* was as familiar as the Congregational bell. The supply of it exceeded the demand, and after every one was loaded and ready to cast off, the barrels came rolling down the chute.

"The next time I saw Marie she was a bit cast down. She wished me to suggest something for her to do. Said she wanted

a mission—a chance to do some good in the world. Thought she'd enjoy being a nurse. I felt sorry for the girl, and suddenly I saw the flicker of a brilliant thought.

"'Marie,' I said, 'as a member of The Society of Useful Women you are under a serious obligation, and you have taste for missionary work. Well, what's the matter with beginning on Nancy Doolittle? You owe her a duty and ought to have the courage—nay, the kindness—to perform it. Nancy talks too much.'

"'Well, I should say so,' said Marie. 'Nancy is a scourge—I have often thought of it.'

"'She's downright wasteful,' I went on. 'She fills every hour with information, and then throws on some more. It keeps coming. Your seams open, and then it's every hand to the pumps! Dora Perkins and Rebecca Ford are just as extravagant. They toss out gems of thought and chunks

of knowledge as if they were as common as caramels.

"'You should go to these girls and kindly but firmly remind them of this fault. Tell them that too much conversation has created more old maids and grass and parlor widows than any other cause. Give them a little lecture on the old law of supply and demand. Show them that it applies to conversation as well as to cabbages—that if one's talk is too plentiful, it becomes very cheap. Suggest that if Methuselah had lived until now and witnessed all the adventures of the human race, he couldn't afford to waste his knowledge. If he talked only half the time nobody would believe him. They'd think he was crazy, and they'd know why, in past ages, everybody had died but him, and they'd wonder how he had managed to survive the invention of gunpowder. These girls have overestimated the value of good-will. Their securities are not well

secured. There are millions of watered stock in their treasuries, and it isn't worth five cents on the dollar. Marie, you can have a lot of fun. I almost envy you.

"'Tell these girls that the remedy is simple. They must be careful to regulate the supply to the demand. They could easily raise the price above par by denying now and then that they have any conversation in the treasury.'

"Marie promised to undertake this important work, and I knew that in connection with it she would also get some valuable advice.

"You see, this tendency to extravagant display has sunk in very deep. Our young people really do know a lot, and they want others to know that they know it. They are plumed with culture, and it has become a charge instead of a credit.

"Well, things began to mend. Betsey and I went to dine with the Bensons one evening, and Marie was as quiet as a

lamb. She answered modestly when we spoke to her. She told no stories; her jeweled crown of culture was not in sight; she listened with notable success, and delighted us with well-managed and illuminating silence. Neither she nor her mother nor Mrs. Bryson ventured to interrupt the talk of a noted professor who dined with us. Marie was charming.

"After dinner she led me into the library, where we sat down together.

"She seemed a little embarrassed, and presently said, with a laugh, 'I had a talk with those girls, as you suggested.'

"'What did they say?' I asked.

"'What didn't they say?' she exclaimed. 'They flew at me like wildcats. They tore me to pieces—said I was the most dreaded talker in Pointview, that I had talked a steady stream ever since I was born, that nobody had a chance to get in a word with me, that I had made all the boys sick who ever came to see me. What do you think of that?'

"'WHAT DIDN'T THEY SAY? THEY FLEW AT ME LIKE WILDCATS'

"'It's a gross exaggeration!' I said.

"'Well, I thought it over, and made up my mind they were right,' she went on. 'We kissed and made up and organized the Listeners' Circle, and mama and Mrs. Bryson and Mrs. Doolittle have joined. Our purpose is to regulate our talk supply very strictly to the demand.'

"'It's a grand idea!' I exclaimed. 'The Ladies' Talk and Information Trust! Why, it will soon control the entire product of Pointview, and can fix the price. Marie, it's only a matter of time when the conversation of you girls is going to be in the nature of a luxury and as much desired as diamonds. It won't be long before some young fellow will offer his life for one word from you.'

"'Oh, *I'm* hopeless! Nobody cares for me—not a soul!' said Marie.

"'Wait and give 'em a chance,' I answered.

"'Do you think it's true that I've

been such a pestilence?' she asked, as her fingers toyed with the upholstery. 'You know you've been a kind of father to me, and I want you to tell me frankly if I've really made the boys sick.'

"'Why, my dear child, if I were a young man I'd be kneeling at your feet,' I said; and no wonder, for they were a beautiful pair of feet, and none ever supported a nobler girl. Then I went on: 'Marie, your talk is charming. The demand continues. I feel honored by your confidence. Please go on.'

"'I believe I've been foolish without knowing it,' she said, her smile beautiful with its sadness.

"'My dear child, if there were no folly in the world it would be a stupid place, and I for one should want to move,' I said. 'Some never discover their own follies, and they *are* hopeless. You are as wise as you are dear. It's in your power to do a lot of good. Think what you've already accom-

plished. I wish you would continue to help us discourage foolish display in America.'

"'Are there any more chestnuts in the fire?' she asked, with a laugh. 'Not that I'm afraid. I suppose the fire is good for me.'

"'Marie, I love your fingers too well to burn them unduly,' I said. 'By the way, I expect that Harry Delance will be wanting to marry you soon.'

"'Harry!' she exclaimed. 'I talked him to death—and out of the notion—long ago, and I'm not sorry. He isn't my kind.'

"'Harry's a good fellow,' I insisted.

"'But he's so dreadfully nice—such a hopeless aristocrat! Grandfather would have a fit. I want a big, full-blooded, brawny chap, who isn't a slave to his coat and trousers—the kind of man you've talked so much about—one who could get his hands dirty and be a gentleman. I'm

longing for the outdoor life—and the outdoor man to live it with me.'

"'Give Harry a chance — his uneducation had only just begun,' I urged.

"I left Marie with a rather serious look in her face, and began to wonder how I should accomplish the uneducation of Harry.

"That young man came to see me, in a day or two, at our home. My new set of Smollett lay on the piano, and he greatly admired it. Above all things Harry loved books, and his specialty was Smollett; he had read every tale in the series, at college, and made a mark with his thesis on 'The Fathers of English Fiction.' He spent an hour of delight with those books of mine. Then he said to me:

"'Only fifty copies printed?'

"'Only fifty,' I said.

"'Could I get a set?'

"'All sold,' I assured him, 'but I shall be glad to give these books to you on two conditions.'

"He turned in astonishment.

"'They can do you no further harm, and my first request is that you do not lend them. My second is that you take them home in my wheelbarrow by daylight with your own hands.'

"He silently demurred.

"'At last those books have a chance to do some little good in the world, and I don't want them to lose it,' I urged. 'The hands, feet, and legs of the high and low born are slowly being deprived of their rights in this community. Pride is robbing them of their ancient and proper offices. How many of the young men and women of our acquaintance would be seen on the street with a package in their hands, to say nothing of a wheelbarrow? Their souls are above it!'

"'Why should they carry packages and roll wheelbarrows?' Harry asked. 'Stores deliver goods these days.'

"'That's one reason why it costs so much

to live. We have to pay for our pride and our indolence and the delivery of the goods. It's all charged in the bill. Some member of the family used to go to market every morning with his basket and carry the goods home with him.'

"'It would be ridiculous for me to do that,' said Harry. 'We're able to pay the bills.'

"'But you're doing a great injustice to those who are not. You make the delivery system a necessary thing, and those who can't afford it have to help you stand the expense—a gross injustice. I want you to help me in this cause of the hand and foot. Your example would be full of inspiration. Excuse me a moment.'

"I went for the wheelbarrow and rolled it up to the front door. Then we brought out the books and loaded them. That done, I seized the handles of the barrow.

"'Come on,' I said. 'I'll do the work —you share the disgrace with me.'

"My gray hairs were too much for him.

"'No; give me the handles,' he insisted. 'If it won't hurt you, it won't hurt me—that's sure.'

"So, in his silk hat and frock-coat and spats, with a carnation in his buttonhole, he seized the wheelbarrow like a man, and away we went. I steered him up the Main Street, and people began to hail us with laughter from automobiles, and to jest with us on the sidewalk, and Marie came along with two other pretty girls, and the barrow halted in a gale of merriment.

"'What in the world are you doing?' one of them asked.

"'It's the remains of the late Mr. Smollett,' I explained.

"'I'm setting an example to the young,' said Harry, as he mopped his forehead. 'Couldn't help it. I had to do this thing.'

"'Great!' Marie exclaimed. 'Simply

great! I'm going to get me a wheelbarrow.'

"She would take hold of the handles and try it, and went on half a block in spite of our protests, creating much excitement.

"That was the first rude beginning of The Basket and Wheelbarrow Brigade in Pointview, of which I shall tell you later. And now I shall explain my generosity—it can generally be explained—and how I came by the Smollett."

VI

IN WHICH BETSEY COMMITS AN INDISCRETION

"CHRISTMAS was approaching, and Betsey said to me one day that she had been guilty of a great extravagance.

"'I know you will forgive me just this once,' she went on. 'My love for you is so extravagant that I had to keep pace with it. You've simply got to accept something very grand.'

"'I can't think of anything that I need unless it's a new jack-knife,' I said.

"'Nonsense!' she exclaimed. 'You've got to let me spend some money for you. I've been held down in the expression of my affections as long as I can stand it. I've doubled my charities since we were

married, as a token of my gratitude, and now I've a right to do something to please myself.'

"'All right! We'll lift the lid,' I said. 'We can lie about it, I suppose, and cover up our folly.'

"'Well, of course we don't have to tell what it cost,' said Betsey; 'and, Socrates, you can't expect to reform me in a year. It's taken half a lifetime to acquire my follies.'

"That's one trouble with the whole problem. You can't tear down a structure which has been slowly rising for half a century in a day, or in many days.

"Christmas arrived, and Betsey went down-stairs with me and covered my eyes in the hall and led me to the grand piano. Then I was permitted to look, and there was the most gorgeous set of books that my eyes ever beheld—a set of Smollett, in lovely brown calf, decorated with magnificent gold tooling! Yes, I love such

things—who doesn't?—and I gave Betsey a great hug, and we sat down with tears in our eyes to look at the pages of vellum and the wonderful etchings which adorned so many of them. They were charming. I knew that the books had cost at least a thousand dollars. Grandpa Smead looked awfully stern in his gold frame on the wall.

"'Now don't think too badly of me,' she urged. 'Every poor family within twenty miles is eating dinner at my expense this Christmas Day.'

"'You are the dearest girl in all the land!' I said. 'There's nobody like you.'

"'I knew that you were fond of the classics,' said Betsey, 'so I consulted Harry Delance, and he suggested that I should give you a set of Smollett; said it would renew your youth. You know he's devoted to Smollett.'

"'And why shouldn't we keep up with Harry?' I said.

"'Well, you know he took the first

prize in literature, and ought to have excellent taste. Then the young man who sold the set to me is working his way through Yale. I was glad to help him, too; he recommended these books—said they were moral and uplifting—not at all like the modern trash. He knew that we enjoyed home reading. Mary will read them aloud to us, and we'll enjoy them together.'

"This father of romance was not unknown to me, and I did not share her confidence in the joys ahead of us, but said nothing.

"After a fine dinner Betsey wanted to start in at once. We sat down by the fireside while her secretary began to read aloud from one of the treasured volumes. I had not read the story, and chose it as being the least likely to make trouble. In a short time we came to rough going and the young woman began to falter.

"'That will do,' said Betsey, suddenly, as I tried to conceal my emotions.

"She took the book from the hands of her secretary and read on in silence for a minute or so.

"'My land!' she exclaimed, with a look of horror. 'That book would corrupt the morals of John Bunyan.'

"'Never mind; John never lived in Pointview,' I argued. 'He didn't have a chance to get hardened.'

"Betsey had a determined look in her face, and rang for the coachman.

"'I'll have them stored in the stable,' said she, firmly.

"'If you don't keep it locked, all the women in the neighborhood 'll be in there,' I warned her, knowing that she couldn't help telling her friends of what had happened.

"'That's no reason why the men should be unduly exposed,' said Betsey. 'Poor things! It's my duty to protect *you* as long as I can, Socrates.'

"I promised to get rid of the books

somehow, and persuaded her to let them stay where they were until I had had time to think about it. Then she said:

"'Socrates, forgive me. I didn't mean it, and I wanted to be so nice to you. I guess it's a just punishment for my extravagance. I thought the modern novels were bad enough. What can I do for you now?'

"'Always, when you're in doubt, do nothing,' I suggested.

"'Oh, I know what I'll do!' she exclaimed, joyfully. 'I'll knit you a pair of socks with my own hands.'

"'Eureka!' I shouted. 'Those socks shall make footprints on the sands of time.'"

VII

IN WHICH SOCRATES ATTACKS THE WORST DOERS AND BEST SELLERS

"ONE evening, soon after that, Betsey and I went to a party at Deacon Benson's. The Deacon is Marie's grandfather—a strict, old-line Congregationalist. The old gentleman owned some two hundred acres in the very heart of Pointview and about a mile of shore-front. In all the buying and selling, he had refused to part with an acre of his land, now worth at least a million dollars. He had willed it all to Marie.

"Deacon Joe was a relic of Puritan days, with shrewd eyes under heavy gray tufts, and a mouth bent like a sickle, and whiskers

under a strong chin, and lines in his face that suggested the heart of a lion. In his walks he was always accompanied by a hickory cane and a bulldog whose countenance and philosophy were like unto those of the Deacon.

"He was a perfectly honest man who had joined the church with mental reservations. He had reserved the right to employ certain adjectives and nouns which had been useful in Pointview since the days of the pioneer, and which had grown more and more indispensable to the opinions of an honest man. The verb 'to damn' in all its parts and relations had been one of them. The word 'hell' was another. It represented a thing of great conversational value, and he recommended it with perfect frankness to certain people. He loved hell and hard cider, and hated Episcopalians. He loved to tell how one Episcopalian had cheated him in a horse trade, and how another had never paid for a bushel of onions. That

was enough for him. He had always thought them a loose, unprincipled lot with no adequate respect for fire and brimstone. But Deacon Joe was honest, and his word was worth a hundred cents on the dollar.

"Now the Delances were Episcopalians from away back—High-Church Episcopalians, at that. The old man had sniffed a good deal when Harry began to pay attention to Marie, and had come to see me about it.

"I eased his fears and appealed to his avarice. Harry had too much money and some follies, I confessed, but he was sound at heart, and I had hope of making a strong man of him, and of course his money might be a great lever in his hands.

"'Very well—we'll keep an eye on him,' he snapped, and left me without another word.

"After that Marie was allowed to go out with the young man in his drag and tandem.

"Harry and his sister came to the party at Deacon Joe's, and brought with them a late volume of D'Annunzio for Marie to read. Harry wished to know if I had read it, and gave us a talk on the realism of this modern Italian author.

"Again I drew on the memoirs of Dr. Godfrey Vogeldam Guph, and this time I explained that the learned doctor had all the talents but one. He never told a lie—never but once, and that was on his death-bed. Yes, it was a little late, but still it was in time to save his reputation, and, possibly, even his soul. To a man of his parts the truth had always been good enough, and lying unnecessary. If he had told a lie it wouldn't have amounted to anything—everybody would have believed it. He wouldn't have got any credit—poor man! He had no more use for a lie than a fish has for a mackintosh—until he came to his last touching words, which were delivered to a minister and his sister Sophia, who

had been reading to him from a book of D'Annunzio.

"'My chance has arrived at last,' he said to Sophia, 'and in order that I may make the most of it, you will please send for a minister.'

"The latter came, and, seeing the book, asked the good man if he had read it.

"'Alas! my friend, that it should be necessary for me to tell a lie on my death-bed,' said the Doctor. 'But now, at last, I tell it proudly and promptly. I have not read that book.'

"'And therein I do clearly see the truth,' said the wise old minister.

"'Which is this,' the learned Doctor confessed. 'I have come to an hour when a lie, and nothing but a lie, can show my sense of shame. I solemnly swear that I have not read it!'

"'Well, at least you're a noble liar,' said the man of God. 'I absolve you.'

"'I claim no credit—I am only doing my

duty,' said the good Doctor, with a sign of ineffable peace.

"As soon as I could get his attention, I called Harry aside and whispered: 'In Heaven's name, boy, get hold of that book and hang on to it.'

"'Why?' he asked.

"'You don't know the old man as I do —that's why,' I said. 'If he should happen to read it, he'd go after you with his grandfather's sword the next time you showed up here.'

"Marie stood near us, and I beckoned to her, and she came to my side.

"'The book,' said Harry—'would you let me take it?'

"'I took it to my grandfather, and he is reading it in his room,' she answered. 'Shall I go and get it?'

"Harry hesitated.

"'He won't mind,' said Marie; 'I'll go and get it.'

"And away she went.

"She came back to us soon, a bit embarrassed.

"'He seems to be very much interested and—and a little cross,' said she. 'I think he will bring it out to you soon.'

"Harry turned pale.

"'You look sick, old man,' I said.

"'I'm not feeling very well,' said he, 'and I think I shall excuse myself and go home.'

"There was danger of a scene, but he got away unharmed. By and by the lion-hearted deacon came out of his room, asked severely for 'young Delance,' wandered through the crowd, answered indignantly a few inquiries about his health, and returned to his lair.

"I saw that the Deacon was mad. New New England had imprudently bumped into old New England, and it was too soon to estimate the damage."

The Honorable Socrates Potter laughed as he filled his pipe, and resumed with an attitude of ease and comfort:

"I'm a bit of a Puritan myself, although I understood Harry better than did the Deacon. The young people have been captured by the frankness of the Latin races. They call it emancipation. Travel and the higher education have opened the storage vats of foreign degeneracy and piped them into our land. Certain young men who have been 'finished' abroad, where they filled their souls with Latin lewdness, have turned it into fiction and a source of profit. Women buy their books and rush through them, and only touch the low places. There they lie entranced, thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks in Vallombrosa. Like the women in the sack of Ismail, they sit them down and watch for the adultery to begin.

"The imagination of the old world seems to have gone wild—Oscar Wilde! How the Oscars have thriven there since the first of them went to jail!—a degenerate dynasty! —hiding the stench of spiritual rot with the perfume of faultless rhetoric, speaking

the unspeakable with the tongues of angels and of prophets! And mostly, my boy, they have thriven on the dollars of American women under the leadership of modern culture. And, you know, the maiden follows mama. She is an apologist of sublime lewdness, of emancipated human caninity. Now I am no prude. I can stand a fairly strong touch of human nature. I can even put up with a good deal of the frankness of the cat and dog. But the frankness of some modern authors makes me sorry that Adam was a common ancestor of theirs and mine. It's a disgrace to Adam and the whole human brotherhood. We sons of the Puritans ought to get busy in the old cause. Noah had the good sense to keep the animals and the people apart, and that's what we've always stood for."

VIII

IN WHICH SOCRATES ATTACKS THE HELMET AND THE BATTLE-AX

"MARIE came to see us at our home next morning and began to cry as soon as she had sat down in the library. The thing I had looked for had come to pass. Her grandfather had dropped Harry from his list, and warned him to keep off the rag-carpet. There was to be no more prancing around in the 'toot-coach' and the 'Harry-cart,' as he called them, for Marie. In his view it was the surest means of getting to perdition. Harry was an idler, and he had always found that an idle brain was the devil's workshop. Marie might be polite to the young man, but she must keep her

side of the road and see that there was always plenty of room between them.

"'He's so hateful,' Marie said of her grandfather. 'He made such a fuss about our getting a crest that we've a perfect right to! Mama had to give it up.'

"'What! Do you mean to tell me that you have no crest!' I inquired, anxiously.

"'We have one, but we cannot use it; our hands are tied,' was her sorrowful answer.

"'I'm astonished. Why, everybody is going to have a crest in Pointview.

"'The other day I suggested to Bridget Maloney, our pretty chambermaid, that she ought to have the Maloney crest on her letter-heads.

"""What's that?" says Bridget.

"""What's that!" I said, with a look of pity.

"'Then I showed her a letter from Mrs. Van Alstyne, with a lion and a griffin cuffing each other black and blue at the top of the sheet.

"'"It's grand!" said she.

"'"It's the Van Alstyne crest," I said. "It's a proof of respectability. Aren't you as good as they are?"

"'"Every bit!" said she.

"'"That's what I thought. Don't you often feel as if you were better than a good many people you know?"

"'"Sure I do."

"'"Well, that's a sign that you're blue-blooded," said I. "Probably you've got a king in your family somewhere. A crest shows that you suspect your ancestors—nothing more than that. It isn't proof, so there's no reason why you shouldn't have it. You ought not to be going around without a crest, as if you were a common servant-girl. Why, every kitchen-maid will be thinking she's as good as you are. You want to be in style. You have money in the bank, and not half the people who have crests are as well able to afford 'em."

"'"How much do they cost?"

"'IT'S THE VAN ALSTYNE CREST,' I SAID 'IT'S A PROOF OF RESPECTABILITY'"

"'"'Nothing—at least, yours 'll cost nothing, Bridget. I shall be glad to buy one for you."

"'The simple girl thanked me, and I found the Maloney crest for her, and had the plate made and neatly engraved on a hundred sheets of paper.

"'Next week the Pointview *Advocate* will print this item: "Miss Bridget Maloney, the genial chambermaid of Mrs. Socrates Potter, uses the Maloney crest on her letter-heads. She is said to be a lineal descendant of his Grace Bryan Maloney, one of the early dukes of Ireland."

"'Bridget is haughty, well-mannered, and a neat dresser. She's a pace-maker in her set. Even the high-headed servants of Warburton House imitate her hats and gowns.

"'Yesterday Katie O'Neil, one of Mrs. Warburton's maids, came to me for information as to the heraldry of her house.

I found a crest for Katie; and then came Mary Maginness; and Bertha Schimpfelheim, the daughter of a real German count; and one August Bernheimer, a young barber of baronial blood; and Pietro Cantaveri, our prosperous bootblack, who was the grandson of an Italian countess; and so it goes, and soon all the high-born servers of Pointview will be supplied with armorial bearings.

"'These claims to distinction shall be soberly chronicled in the *Advocate*. Not one is to be overlooked or treated with any lack of respect. On the contrary, the whole thing will be exploited with a proper sense of awe.'

"Marie laughed.

"'Wait till I tell mama,' she said. 'It's lucky you told me. It's saved us. I guess grandfather was right about that.'

"'And he's right about Harry, too, I said. 'But don't despair; I'm trying to put a new mainspring in the boy. If I succeed, your

grandfather may have to change his mind.'

"She went away comforted, but not happy.

"Well, I went on with the crest campaign. Bertha, Pietro, and the others got their crests and saw their names in the paper.

"The supply of crests was soon perfectly adequate, and among our best people the demand for them began to diminish, and suddenly ceased. The beast rampant and couchant, the helmet and the battle-ax, associated only with mixed tenses and misplaced capitals according to their ancient habit. This chambermaid grammar was referred to by my friend, Dr. Guph, as the 'battle-ax brand'—a designation of some merit. Expensive stationery fell into the fireplaces of Pointview, and armorial plates were found in the garbage. The family trees of the village were deserted. Not a bird twittered in their branches. The subject of genealogy was buried in deep silence,

save when the irreverent referred to some late addition to our new aristocracy.

"Now I want to make it clear that we have no disrespect for the customs of any foreign land. If I were living in a foreign land and needed evidence of my respectability, I'd have a crest, if it was likely to prove my case. But America was founded by the sons of the yeomen, and the yeomen established their respectability with other evidence. Their brains were so often touched by the battle-ax that some of us have an hereditary shyness about the head, and we dodge at every baronial relic."

IX

IN WHICH SOCRATES INCREASES THE SUPPLY OF SPLENDOR

"IN due time the Society of Useful Women met at our house, and I was invited to make a few remarks, and said in effect:

"'We are trying to correct the evil of extravagant display in America, and first I ask you to consider the cause of it. We find it in the ancient law of supply and demand. The reason that women love to array themselves in silk and laces and jewels and picture-hats and plumes of culture and sunbursts of genealogy lies in the fact that the supply of these things has generally been limited. Their cost is so high, therefore, that few can afford them,

and those who wear them are distinguished from the common herd. This matter of buying distinction is the cause of our trouble. Now I propose that we increase the supply of jewels, silks, laces, picture-hats, and ancestors in Pointview—that we bring them within the reach of all, and aim a death-blow at the distinction to be obtained by displaying them. There isn't a servant-girl in this community who doesn't pant for luxuries. Why shouldn't she? I move that we have a committee to consider this inadequate supply of luxuries, with the power to increase the same at its own expense.'

"I was appointed chairman of that committee, and went to work, with Betsey and Mrs. Warburton as coadjutors.

"We stocked a store with clever imitations of silks, satins, and old lace, and the best assortment of Brummagem jewelry that could be raked together. We had a great show-case full of glittering paste—

bracelets, tiaras, coronets, sunbursts, dog-collars, rings, necklaces—all extremely modish and so handsome that they would have deceived any but trained eyes. Our pearls and sapphires were especially attractive. We hired a skilled dressmaker, familiar with the latest modes, and a milliner who could imitate the most stunning hats on Fifth Avenue at reasonable prices. Every servant in good standing in our community was permitted to come and see and buy and say 'Charge it.'

"Mrs. Warburton's ball for the servants of Pointview, to be given in the Town Hall, was coming near. It happened that the committee of arrangements included Marie and the young Reverend Robert Knowles. Their intimacy began in the work of that committee. For days they rode about in the minister's motor-car getting ready for the ball and for the greater intimacy that followed it.

"Our ball sent its radiance over land and

sea. Sunbursts shone like stars in the Milky Way. A fine orchestra furnished music. Reporters from New York and other cities were present.

"The nurses, cooks, kitchen-girls, laundresses, and chambermaids of Pointview were radiant in silk, lace, diamonds, pearls, and rubies. The costumes were brilliant, but all in good taste. Alabaster? Why, my dear boy, they would have made the swell set resemble a convention of bean-poles. For the matter of busts, they busted the record!

"The only mishap occurred when Bertha Schimpfelheim—some call her Big Bertha—slipped and fell in a waltz, injuring the knee of her companion. To my surprise the brainiest of these working-folk saw the satire in which they were taking part, and entered into it with all the more spirit because they knew.

"The presence of Mr. Warburton, Mr. and Mrs. Delance, Marie, and the Reverend

"RADIANT IN SILK, LACE, DIAMONDS, PEARLS, AND RUBIES"

Robert Knowles on the floor insured proper decorum and lent an air of seriousness to the event. It proved an effective background for Marie. She shone like a pigeon-blood ruby among garnets. She wore no jewels, and was distinguished only by her beauty and the simplicity of her costume and the unmistakable evidence of good breeding in her face and manners.

"'Harry sat with me in the gallery.

"'She's wonderful!' he exclaimed. 'All this rococo ware simply emphasizes her charm. Only a girl of brains could carry it off as she does. She's among them and yet apart. An old duke once told me that if you want to know the rank of a lady, observe how she treats an inferior. It's quite true. By Jove! I'm in love with Marie, and I'm going to make her my wife if possible.'

"'That's one really substantial result of the ball,' I said.

"'Do you think that she cares for Knowles —that minister chap?'"

"'I'm inclined to think that she likes you better,' I said.

"'Is your inclination encouraged by evidence?'

"'That query I must decline to answer,' said I.

"'Well, you know, I'm not going to be long in doubt,' the boy declared, as he left me.

"The event was an epoch-maker. Long reports of it appeared in the daily press and traveled far in a surge of thoughtful merriment. For instance: 'Miss Mary Maginness, the accomplished lady-in-waiting of Mrs. William Warburton, of Warburton House, wore a coronet and a dog-collar of diamonds above a costume of white brocaded satin, trimmed with old duchesse lace and gold ornaments. Miss Maginness is a lineal descendant of Lord Rawdon Maginness, of Cork, who early in the seventeenth century commanded an army that drove the Italians out of Ireland.'

"And so it went, with column after column of glittering detail. Since then the servants have enjoyed a monopoly in splendor—it's been a kind of Standard Jewel Company, and certain rich men have boasted in my presence that they haven't a jewel in their houses; and one added with quite unneeded emphasis: 'Not a measly jewel. My wife says that they suggest dish-water and aprons.'

"'It is too funny!' said Mrs. Warburton. 'You know those jewels at the ball were quite as real as many that are worn by ladies of fashion. Most rich women who want to save themselves worry keep their jewels in the strong-box and wear replicas of paste and composition.'

"The instalment jeweler has gone out of business, and half a dozen servant-girls have refused to make further payments on their solitaires and returned them.

"One singular thing happened. Nearly

all those servants paid their bills to our store, and we closed out with an unexpected profit, while a number of stores who charged their goods to the noble band of employers have stopped for need of money."

X

IN WHICH SOCRATES BREAKS THE DRAG AND TANDEM MONOPOLY IN POINTVIEW

"HARRY'S father came often for a smoke and talk with me after dinner, and his favorite subject was Harry. As a subject of conversation, Harry was more successful than the average crime. In this respect he resembled a divorce or a murder. That's how it happened that Harry got on my mind. He is one of the most skilful riders of the human mind that I know of. He was wearing us out, and we were all bucking to get him off. Well, his father was thinking about him while I was thinking about the rest of Pointview. It was another case of Rome and Cæsar. Harry's last achieve-

ment was to accuse his father of being the fossiliferous remnant of an ancient time.

"'The truth is, Harry hasn't enough competition in his line,' I suggested, one evening. 'The other boys are doing well, but they don't keep up with him.

"'You know after I left college, in my youth, I spent a couple of years in Wyoming. Well, Mary Ann Crowder was the only single lady within a hundred miles, and she was the most obstreperous damn critter that I ever saw. She had a monopoly an' knew it, an' wasn't decently polite. Put on more style than a nigger at a cake-walk. Though she had red hair an' only one eye, some of the boys used to ride sixty miles for a visit with her. Then they had to swim the Snake River and maybe wrestle with a tame bear that was loose in the door-yard. By and by a man with two unmarried daughters moved on to a ranch near us, and then Mary Ann began to be polite. She suddenly became a human

being, an' killed the bear, an' moved across the river an' married the first man that proposed, and lived happily ever after.

"'What we need here is another drag and tandem.'

"'Get what you need, and I'll pay the bills,' said Harry's father.

"So I went to a sale in New York, bought my drag and tandem-cart, and had them shipped to Pointview. Our local sign-painter put a crest or, rather, a kind of royal hatchment, on the panels of both. Then I sold them for next to nothing to a local livery on conditions. Its new owner agreed to use the drag for chowder-parties, and to break the worst-looking nags in his stable to drive tandem on the cart.

"Tommy Ruggles, a smart-looking knight of the currycomb, whose first name was a kitchen word in Pointview, sprang to my assistance. He had curly hair, and a good deal of natural cuteness, and was, moreover, 'a divvle with the girls.' He con-

tracted with me to take a selected list of female servants for an airing in the tandem-cart. He was to get a royalty of five dollars a head on every servant that was properly aired, with a small premium on red ones.

"He began with Big Bertha, our worthy German countess. Tommy had a playful humor, and cracked his long whip over the rough-harnessed nags and merrily tooted his horn as the rig lumbered along through the main streets of our village. Many laughed and many wondered, while an army of noisy kids followed and hung on behind.

"Tommy got his second girl, who was hit on the head with a ripe tomato, and then it was all over. The girls wouldn't stand for it. The sport had become too exciting. Tommy told me how he had invited Bridget Maloney, and she had said: 'Na-a-ah! Do yez take me for an idiot? Sure every rotten egg in the town would be jumpin' at me.'

"It suggested an idea. As the imitation

idiots had given out, we would try the real thing. So I 'phoned the manager of our thriving idiot asylum on the Post Road and arranged to have Tommy take one of his patients every day for a drive in the cart. Why shouldn't all the idiots enjoy themselves? Fresh air would be good for them. It would turn the cart into a charity which would cover a part of my sins. I asked for the better class of idiots—the quiet ones, who had sense enough to appreciate a good thing. The parade began and continued day after day.

"Harry had retired his tandem after Tom, with a stiff-backed idiot by his side, had clattered after him through the village behind the two spavined nags to the amusement of many people. He had kept up with Harry.

"Soon that kind of a rig was known as the Idiot Wagon. Then Tommy resigned; it was more than he could stand. He said he was willing to do any honest work for

money, but not that. He said that the idiots imagined themselves rich, and put on so much style that it made the whole thing ridiculous.

"'Never mind—it's the habit of idiots,' I said.

"'One of 'em thinks he's Napoleon Bonaparte, an' calls me his man, and wears a plug hat and sits as straight as a ramrod, and bows to the people when they laugh at him,' said Tommy. 'Some of 'em get stuck on the cart, and it's a fight to get 'em out of it. I tell ye, I'm sick o' the job. The sight o' that cart makes me feel nutty.'

"'Never mind, Tom,' I said; 'you've been a public benefactor, and you and the cart are entitled to an honorable discharge.'

"Every bright day the drag was tooling over the road with picnic-parties on their way to one of the popular beaches. Our local lodges and political clubs, and now and then a load of Italians, were able to

enjoy the luxury which had been the exclusive delight of Harry and the fluffy maidens of Pointview.

"Drags an' tandems are all right if you don't go too far with 'em. We were just in time to prevent them from becoming tools of degeneration in our village."

XI

IN WHICH SUNDRY PEOPLE MAKE GREAT DISCOVERIES

"THERE were many private panics in Pointview. It was my privilege to observe, under calm exteriors, a raging fever of excitement—characters going bankrupt, collectors wandering in a fruitless quest. One little rill that flowed into the swift river of national trouble issued from the bosom of my clerk, Mr. 'Cub' Sayles. It had been one of the most placid bosoms in Pointview. Now it was in the midst of what I have since referred to as the 'Violet and Supper Panic of 1907.'

"Cub was a quiet, hard-working, serious-minded boy whose mother moved in the

higher circles of Boston. He had a low, pleasant voice, a touch of Harry's dialect, and a sad face. He had asked for a higher salary, and I had asked for information.

"'You see every time I go to call on my girl I have to take a bunch of violets or a two-pound box of candy,' he said. 'Then if we go to the theater her chaperon has to be with us—don't you know? She's a stout lady who complains of faintness before the play ends, and I have to ask them out to supper. Then I am always greatly alarmed, for you never can tell what will happen, sir, with two ladies at supper and only twenty dollars in your pocket, and both ladies fond of game and crab meat. It's really very trying. I sit and tremble as I watch them, and go home with only a feeble remnant of my salary, and next day I have to pawn my diamond ring.'

"'All that isn't honest,' I said. 'You're getting her favor under false pretenses. You're trying to make her believe that you

are a sort of aristocrat with lots of money. Why don't you tell her the truth—that you can't afford violets, that the two-pound box is a burden that is breaking your back, and that every theater-supper sends you to the pawnbroker's?'

"'I can't—she would throw me over,' he explained. 'The girls expect those things. They like to show and talk about them—don't you know? It's the fashion. Our best young men do it, sir.'

"'Well, if you are willing to give up your honor for a lady's smile you won't do for me,' I said. 'You must not only tell the truth, but live it. You must be just what you are—a poor boy working for twenty dollars a week. If the girl doesn't like it she's unfit to associate with honest men. If you don't like it I don't like you.'

"Perspiration had begun to dampen the brow of Cub.

"'I—I hadn't seen it in that light, sir,'

he said. 'But what am I to do, sir? I am heavily indebted to my tailor.'

"'What! Haven't you paid for those lovely garments?'

"'I had them charged, sir,' Cub sadly answered. 'My mother sent me a hundred dollars to pay for them, but I loaned it to Roger Daniels. I should be much obliged, sir, if you would collect it for me.'

"I went to Roger and made him pay the debt. He paid it in a curious way—by going to his tailor and buying a hundred dollars' worth of clothes for Cub and having them charged. It was compounding a felony, but my client was satisfied and Roger was grateful. He began to have some regard for me. Not every lawyer had been able to make him pay. Within a day or so he came to consult me about a mortgage on his patrimony.

"Roger had married and settled down immediately after his remarkable cruise. He had kept his party in ignorance of his

financial troubles and returned with his reputation as an aristocrat firmly established. The gay young Bessie Runnymede had accepted him at once. He had become junior partner in a firm of brokers and had rented a handsome residence in Pointview.

"So they began their little play with ladies, lords, and gentlemen in the cast, and with a country-house, a tandem, a crested limousine, and a racing launch for scenery. But Roger had what is known as a bad season. Well, you know, the moving-picture shows had got such a hold on the public.

"At first we concluded that he must have made another lucky play in the market. Then, after six months or so, bills against Roger began to arrive for collection from sundry department stores in the city. He was a good fellow and had plausible excuses, and I declined to press payment and returned the bills.

"One day, some eight months after the

wedding, an urgent telegram from Roger brought me to New York. I found the young man in his office, with his wife at his side. They were both in tears. I sat down with them, and he told me this story:

"'The fact is, I'm a thief,' he began. 'I have confessed the truth to my partners. Since my marriage I have taken about twenty thousand dollars—needed every cent of it to keep going. The fact is, I expected to make a killing in the market and return the money—had inside information—but everything went wrong. Yesterday I was cleaned out.

"'I went home late in the evening. I hoped that my wife would be in bed, but she was waiting for me. She said that I looked sick, and wanted to know what was the matter. I told her that I had a headache, and got into bed as soon as possible; but I couldn't sleep. Long after midnight my wife rose and turned on the light and came to my bed and said that she knew I

was troubled about something—that she had seen it in my face for weeks. She begged that I would let her help me bear it. Then I told her the truth, and discovered—for I didn't know her before—one of the noblest women in the world. She hid her face in the pillow, and then I had a bad moment.

"' "Why did you do it?" she asked as soon as she could speak.

"'And I said: "We've been foolish—trying to keep up with Harry and the rest of them. It was my fault. I ought to have told you that I couldn't go the pace."

" 'She saw the truth in a flash, and the old-fashioned woman in her got to work.

"'"Roger, get up and dress yourself," said she. "We will go and see your partners to-night. We will go together, for I am as guilty as you. We will tell them the truth and beg for time. Maybe we can get the money."

"'We started in our motor-car about one o'clock for the city, on dark and muddy roads. Some ten miles out we broke an axle and left car and driver and went on afoot. My wife wouldn't wait. No trains were running. But we could get a trolley five miles down the road. So we went on in the dark and silence. I put my arm around her, and not a word passed between us for an hour or so. I don't know what she was thinking of, but I was trying to count my follies. It began to rain, and I felt sorry for Bess, and took off my coat and threw it over her.'

"'"I don't mind the rain," she said. "It will cool me."

"'We were a sight when we got to the trolley, and just before daylight we rang the bell of the senior partner. Our weariness and muddy shoes and rain-soaked garments were a help to us. They touched his heart, sir. Anyhow, he gave me a week of grace in which to make good. I must get the

money somehow, and I want your advice about it.'

"'I'm glad of one part of it all,' I said—'that you have discovered each other and learned that you are human beings of a pretty good sort. I've much more respect for both of you than I ever had before.'

"He looked at me in surprise.

"'Oh, you are a better man than you were three months ago! I answered him. 'You happen to have run against the law, and it's shocked and frightened you. But you are improving. Long ago you began to incur debts which you couldn't pay, and you must have known that you couldn't pay them. In that manner you became possessed of a large sum of money belonging to other people. It was used not for necessities, but to maintain a foolish display. That is the most heartless kind of fraud. I've much more respect for you now that you see your fault and confess it. I'm convinced now that you have a conscience,

and that you will be likely to make some use of it in the future. I'm particularly grateful to your wife. She has shown me that she is just a woman, and not an angel. I don't believe that it was at all necessary for you to have groveled in aristocratic crimes in order to win her heart. The yacht cruise and the tandem and the violets and the Fifth Avenue clothes and the ton of candy were quite superfluous. You needed only to tell her the truth, like a man, and say that you loved her.'

"'It is true, Roger,' said the girl as she broke down again.

"'I did it all to please you, dear,' the boy answered, in his effort to comfort her.

"'And it did please me,' she said, brokenly, 'but I know that I should have been better pleased if—'

"She hesitated, and I expressed her thought for her:

"'If he had centralized on manhood. There is something sweeter than violets

and grander than fine raiment in a sort of character that a boy should offer to the girl he loves.'

"They were both convinced. It was easy to see that now, and I promised to do what I could for them.

"I got a schedule of the young man's debts and found that he owed, among other debts, six thousand dollars to sundry shops and department stores in New York—the purchases of his wife in the eight months of their wedded life. I asked her how it could have happened.

"'He opened accounts for me and said I could buy what I wanted, and you know it is so easy to say "Charge it,"' was her answer. 'Every one has accounts these days, and they tempt you to buy more than you need.'

"'It is true. Credit is the latest ally of the devil. It is the great tempter. It is responsible for half the extravagance of modern life. The two words 'charge it'

have done more harm than any others in the language. They have led to a vast amount of unnecessary buying. They have developed a talent for extravagance in our people. They have created a large and growing sisterhood and brotherhood of dead-beats. They have led to bankruptcy and slow pay and bad debts. They have raised the cost of everything we require because the tradesman compels us to pay his uncollected accounts. They are added to your bills and mine, and the merchant prince suffers no impairment of his fortune.

"Bessie's bank-account was also overdrawn. That reminds me of a new sinner —the bank-check. It is so easy to draw a check—and, then, somehow, it's only a piece of paper. You let it go without a pang while you would be very thoughtful if you were counting out the money and parting with it.

"The check is another way of saying 'Charge it.'

"That evening I went to see Harry."

XII

IN WHICH HARRY IS FORCED TO ABANDON SWAMP FICTION AND LIKE FOLLIES AND TO STUDY THE GEOGRAPHY AND NATIVES OF A LAND UNKNOWN TO OUR HEIRISTOCRACY

"I FOUND Harry smoking with Cub Sayles in his den above stairs in the big country-house of Henry Delance. As I entered Harry said to his young friend:

"'I have to talk over some things with Mr. Potter—would you mind going down to the library?'

"Cub withdrew, and Harry sat down with me.

"'I suppose you've seen him?' he asked, nervously.

"'Whom?'

"'Why, you know a mysterious stranger has been looking for me and—by Jove!—I'm scared stiff. He's an Englishman.'

"'What of that?'

"'Let me show you,' said Harry.

"He took a key from his pocket, unlocked a door, and fetched the familiar skull of the Bishop of St. Clare and put it on the table before me.

"'It's that damn Bishop's head,' he whispered. 'It has come back—would you believe it?—picked up by a fisherman on the Irish coast and returned to the express office in London. All the old directions were quite legible on the box. "To Harry Delance, SS. *Lusitania*. If not found, forward to Pointview, Conn., U.S.A., charges collect!" So it came on. I received a notice and went down and got it out of bond and paid three pounds, and here it is.'

"'It looks as if the Bishop was out for revenge,' I said, with a laugh.

"'He's got on my nerves and my conscience,' said Harry. 'By Jove! he haunts me. When I heard of this mysterious Englishman to-day I got a chill.'

"'You go buy yourself a small shovel and a pocket light to-morrow,' I suggested, and at night go back in the hills with the Bishop's head and bury it.'

"'And if I get into trouble I want you to take care of me.'

"I made no answer. It didn't seem necessary, but I said: 'There's another matter of which I have come to talk with you. Our friend Roger is in trouble.'

"I told him the story of Roger's downfall. It got under his vest, and I added: 'Now, Harry, it's up to you to indulge in some more philanthropy. You ought to help him.'

"'What—what can I do?' he asked in amazement.

"'Lend him the money—twenty thousand dollars. It isn't all that the public

will charge against you on Roger's account, but it will do.'

"'Harry sank in his chair and threw up his hands as if grasping for a straw.

"'It's my whole allowance for the year,' he said, 'and I couldn't appeal to the Governor.'

"'Nevertheless you ought to do it, for Roger told me that it was your pace that brought him where he is.'

"'What an ass!' Harry exclaimed, and the old Bishop seemed to indorse his view. 'By the blue beard of the Caliph, what am I to do?'

"'Pay it,' I insisted.

"'Pay it and die,' he groaned. 'I shall have to do it somehow, but this kind of thing is grinding me.'

"'You can go to my ranch in Wyoming and live on nothing for six months,' I said. 'When you get back I'll lend you enough to tide you over!

"'I'll do it,' he said, as if it were the very straw he had been reaching for.

"Then he began to tell me of other troubles. Marie had been decidedly cool to Harry at the servants' ball. Then he had met her on the street, and she had barely noticed him and hurried away, with the young Reverend Robert Knowles at her side. Harry was, fortunately, going slow, but he had received internal injuries and was suffering from shock.

"'The old man is at the bottom of it,' I explained. 'You gave him a dose from the wrong bottle. It p'isoned him.'

"'By Jove! What a prude he is!' said Harry. 'Upon my word that is one of the noblest books I ever read—contains a great lesson, don't you know? It takes you straight to the heights.'

"'Too straight,' I said. 'It turns out for nothing. It crosses a morass to avoid going around. When you reach the high ground you are covered with mud and slime. You need to be washed and disinfected, and perhaps you've caught a

fever that will last as long as you live. Many a boy and girl have got mired in this swamp fiction that you enjoy so much. There are many of us who prefer to go around the swamp and keep on a decent footing even if it takes longer.'

"'We want to know all sides of life,' said Harry.

"'And would you care to see the girl you loved studying life in a brothel?'

"'Well, really, you know, that's different,' Harry stammered.

"'But the fact is, her feet might as well be in a brothel as her brain,' I insisted. 'She might shake the dust from her *feet.* Harry, there's one side of life that you ought to study at once—the American side. You've neglected the Western hemisphere in your studies. When can you start for the ranch?'

"'Day after to-morrow—if you like. This place is a dreadful bore.'

"'Good! I'll attend to the tickets to-

day. The cart, drag, and horses will be all the better for a vacation, and the eyes of the people are in need of rest.'

"'The whole outfit is going to be sold,' said Harry. 'Idiots and the hoi polloi have quite ruined the sport here. The Governor is always poking fun at it, you know, and it has made me so weary! One can't stand that kind of thing forever—can he? I got after his helmet, battle-ax, and family tree, by Jove! Our crested chambermaids and bootblacks have been a great help to me. What a noble band of philanthropists! Father and I have made an agreement. He is going to chuck the battle-ax and saw the royal branches off our family tree and I am going to sell the drag, cart, and horses.'

"'That's a great treaty,' I said. 'The settlement of the Alaskan frontier is not more important than fixing the boundaries of our social life. Let us surrender the tools of idiocy; especially, let us abandon all

claim to the helmet and battle-ax. They're all right in their place, but they aren't ours. The plowshare and the pruning-hook are our symbols.'

"'By Jove! you know, the old Bishop of St. Clare agrees with you exactly,' said Harry. 'I've been reading his life and writings, which I picked up in London, and he's about converted me to your way of thinking. He hated "the glittering idleness" of the rich and put industry above elegance.'

"'And he doesn't intend that your education shall be neglected—he's looking after you.'

"'He's as industrious as Destiny,' said the young man. 'Did you know that Cub Sayles is engaged?'

"'To whom?'

"'Mrs. Revere-Chalmers.'

"'God rest his soul!' I exclaimed.

"'It's just the thing for Cub,' said Harry. 'He's poor but presentable, and

has many extravagant tastes. She's quite a bit older than he, of course, but that isn't unusual.'

"'I warned him long ago, knowing that his folly would undo him. Now he will be a captain of New Thought, King of the Flub Dubs, advertising manager of the Psychological Hair Factory, and inspector of pimples.'

"'But don't you know that he will have everything that he desires?'

"'Except happiness.'

"'Oh, I think that she is very fond of him!' said Harry. 'She told me to-day that he is the only man she ever loved, and the dear old girl thinks that she won him by concentration.'

"With this remark, made on the 20th of May, Harry dropped out of the history of Pointview until December."

XIII

IN WHICH THE MINISTER GETS INTO LOVE AND TROUBLE

"CUB resigned his place in my office next day, and confessed his purpose, and I heard him with sober respect and tried in every proper way to save him. It wouldn't work.

"The lines of panic had left the face of Cub. The two-pound expression had departed from it. The faintness of chaperons would no longer imperil his comfort.

"'A hundred and four pounds of candy and twenty suppers, and all for nothing!' I exclaimed. 'You ruin a girl's digestion and chuck her over. It isn't fair.'

"'But, sir, I found that I didn't love her,' said Cub.

"'What a waste of violets, confectionery, and crab-meat!'

"'Yes, sir, in a way; but you see I had to have my training in society,' Cub declared.

"What was the use? Cub had no more humor than a sewing-machine.

"'The wedding day drew on apace, and just before its arrival a notorious weekly in New York gave the lady a drubbing. Certain circumstances that made her first marriage unhappy were plainly hinted at. The town shuddered with amazement. Cub stood pat, but the Episcopal minister refused to marry them. The Baptist minister balked. It looked like a postponement, but the knot was tied, on schedule time, by the Reverend Robert Knowles. That made no end of talk, and a small party of insurgents left his church. Deacon Benson was on the point of pulling out, and swore so much about it that I advised him to hang on for his own sake.

"'But there ain't much to hang on to,' said the Deacon.

"'Mrs. Revere-Chalmers-Sayles held a mortgage on the property of the Baptist Society of Pointview, and asked me to foreclose it.

"'I have another mortgage on the Congregational church, and they're behind in their interest, but I'm not going to push them,' she said to me.

"So young Mr. Knowles had acted from motives of business prudence, and was not much at fault. The old church had ceased to live within its means and had entered the 'charge it' van, and was trying to serve two masters.

"Betsey and I paid both mortgages and threw them in the fire.

"Young Mr. Knowles came to see us with Marie, and brought the thanks of the parish. They were a good-looking couple.

"This minister of the First Congregational Church of Pointview now aspired

to be the prime minister of its first heiress. Their acquaintance, which had begun in the arrangements for the servants' ball, had grown in warmth and intimacy as soon as Harry had gone. Robert began to take after Marie, with muffler open and all the gas on. He was a swell of a parson—utterly damned with good-fortune. Had an income from the estate of his father, a call from on high, a crest from Charlemagne, diplomas from college and the seminary, a fine figure, red cheeks, and 'heavenly eyes.' As to his fatal gift of beauty, the young ladies were of one mind. They agreed, also, about the cut of his garments, that were changed several times a day.

"A dashing, masculine, head-punching spirit might have saved him with all his ballast, but he didn't have it. The Reverend Robert was a good fellow to everybody—a fairly sound-hearted, decent, handsome fellow, but not a man. To be that, one has to know things at first hand—

especially work and trouble. He was a second-hand, school-made thinker. His doctrines came out of the books, but his conduct was mildly modern. He danced and smoked a little, and played bridge and golf, and made his visits in a handsome motor-car.

"Marie liked the young man, and she and her mother rode and tramped about with him almost every day of that summer. Deacon Joe showed signs of faintness when he spoke of him.

"One day I went up to the Benson homestead and found the old man sitting on his piazza alone.

"'Where's Marie?' I asked.

"'Off knocking around with the minister,' said Deacon Joe, in a voice frail with contempt.

"'She might be in worse company,' I suggested.

"'Maybe,' he snapped.

"'What's the matter with the minister?'

"'Nothing,' said the old man, with a chuckle. 'He's a complete gentleman, complete! So plaguy beautiful that he's a kind of a girl's plaything. He couldn't milk a cow or dig a hill o' potatoes. Acts kind o' faint an' sickly to me.'

"The Deacon thoughtfully stirred the roots of his beard with the fingers of his right hand, and went on with a squint and a feeble tone which he seemed to think best suited to his subject.

"'Talks so low you can hardly hear him. I have to set with my hand to my ear every Sunday to make out what he's sayin', an' he prays as if he had the lung fever. Talks o' hell as though it was a quart o' cold molasses. That's one reason we ain't no respect for it in this community. Ay—'es! That's the reason.'

"He squinted his face thoughtfully and resumed with more energy.

"'I like to hear a man get up on his hind legs and holler as they used to—by

gravy! Ye can't scare anybody by whispers. Damn it, sir, what we need is an old-fashioned revival.'

"The Deacon halted to take a chew of tobacco, and went on, with a sorrowful calmness:

"'Now this young feller don't want to give no credit to God—not a bit—no, sir! Science has done everything. I've noticed it time an' ag'in. T'other Sunday he said that an angel spoke to Moses, an' the Bible says, as plain as A B C, that God spoke to him. How can he expect that God is going to bless his ministry, an' he never givin' Him any credit?'

"'It's rather bad politics, anyhow,' I said.

"'An' the church is goin' from bad to worse,' he complained. 'The average attendance is about forty-seven, an' it used to be between five an' six hundred, an' we are all taxed to death to keep it goin'. I have to pay three hundred a year for the

privilege o' gittin' mad every Sunday. Two or three of us have got after him an' made him promise to do better. Some awful free-minded folks have crept into the church, an' the fact is, we need their money,' Deacon Joe went on. 'What the minister ought to do is stick to the old doctrines that are safe an' sound. 'St'id o' that he's tryin' to sail 'twixt rock an' reef.'

"'Between Scylla and Charybdis,' I suggested.

"'Between Silly an' what?' the old man asked, as if in doubt of my meaning.

"We were interrupted by the arrival of the Reverend Robert with Marie and her mother, in his handsome landaulet. Marie asked me to go with her to gather wild flowers in a bit of woodland not far away. I went, and soon saw her purpose. She had had the 'jolliest, cutest letter from Harry' that she had ever read, and seemed to be in doubt as to whether she ought to let him write to her.

"'Has your grandfather forbidden it?' I asked.

"'No.'

"'Then it's up to you,' I said.

"'Do you think he cares for me?'

"'I should think him a fool if he didn't,' I said, looking down into her lovely dark eyes.

"'But do you really and truly think that he cares for me?' she insisted.

"'I suspect that he does.'

"'Why?'

"'A lawyer must not betray a confidence.'

"'Do you like him?'

"'Wait until his uneducation is completed, and I'll tell you. I am beginning to have hope for Harry.'

"'I'm sorry grandpapa is so hateful!' she exclaimed, with a sigh.

"I stood up for the old man and asked:

"'Do you like the Reverend Robert?'

"'Very much! He's so good looking,

and has such beautiful thoughts! Have you heard him preach?'

"'No.'

"'We think his sermons are fine. Everybody likes them but grandpapa. He wants noise, you know—lung power and old theology. I hate it!'

"'He doesn't take to Robert?'

"'No; he calls him a calf. Nobody is good enough for me, you know. He'd like me to marry some man with a hoe, who would take me to church and Sunday-school every sabbath morning, and for a walk to the cemetery in the afternoon, and down to the prayer-meeting every Wednesday night, and on a journey from Genesis to Revelations once a year. It's too much to expect of a human being. Then the hoes are in the hands of Poles, Slavs, and Italians. So what am I to do?'

"'Well, you are young—you can afford to wait a while,' I said.

"'But not until I am old and all withered

up. I am going to marry the man I love within a year or so, if he has the good sense to ask me. Don't you ever go to church?'

"'No,' I said.

"'Why not?'

"I tried to think. There were the ministers—two boys and three old men—dried beef and veal! Not to my knowledge had a single one of them ever expressed an idea. They were seen, but not felt. The Church! Why, certainly, it was founded on the sweetness, strength, and sanity of a great soul. I had almost forgotten that. It had grown feeble. It had got its fortunes entangled in psychological hair. It should have been correcting the follies of the people—their selfishness, their sinful pride, their extravagance, their loss of honor and humanity. Had I not seen, in the case of Harry and his followers, how the Church had failed in its work? Ought it not to have sought and saved them long ago—saved them from needless disaster? It

should have been appealing to their consciences. If appeals had failed it should have stung them with ridicule or raised a voice like that of Christ against the Pharisees. The Church! Why, it was living, not in the present, but in the past. Here in Pointview the Church itself had become one of the greatest follies of the time.

"'I want you to go next Sunday and hear Mr. Knowles, as a favor to me—won't you?' Marie asked.

"'Yes,' I said. 'In the next five Sundays I shall go to every Protestant church in Pointview. I want to know what they're doing. I shall put aside my scruples and go.'"

XIV

IN WHICH SOCRATES DISCOVERS A NEW FOLLY

"WELL, I went and saw the Reverend Robert Knowles sail between 'Silly and Charybdis.' He bumped on both sides, but did it rather gracefully. He reviewed the career of Samuel, who lived and died some thousands of years ago. The miraculous touch of Carlyle or Macaulay might easily have failed in the task of reviving a man so thoroughly dead. But the Reverend Robert entered this unequal contest with no evidence of alarm. The dead man prevailed. The power of his long sleep fell upon us. My head grew heavy. I felt my weight bearing down upon the cushions. A stiffness came into my bones.

"On our way to church Betsey had placed the young minister in my thoughts. The trustees had reckoned that he would revive the interest of the young people in Sunday worship; and he did, but it was the worship of youth and beauty.

"Well, the other churches were emptier than ever, and so the spiritual life of the community was in no way improved. In fact, I guess it had been a little embittered by the new conditions. As soon as it became known that Marie had won the prize of his favor the other girls had returned to their native altars, having discovered that the new minister was vain, worldly, and conceited.

"Lettie Davis, who had made a dead set at him, had been strongly convinced of that as soon as he began to show a preference for Marie, and the Davis family had left the church and gone over to the Methodists. The young man had been filled with alarm. He feared it would

wreck the church. That old ship of the faith was leaky and iron-sick, and down by the head and heel, as they say at sea. She rolled if one got off or on her.

"Such was the condition of things when we entered the church of my fathers. We sat down in the Potter pew a few minutes before the service began. There were, by actual count, forty-nine people gathered around the altar of the old church, and behind us a great emptiness and the ghosts of the dead. In my boyhood I had sat in its dim light, with six hundred people filling every seat to the doors and a man of power and learning in the pulpit.

"Faces long forgotten were there in those pews—old faces, young faces. How many thousands had left its altar to find distant homes or to go on their last journey to that nearer one in the churchyard! My heart was full and ready for strong meat, but none came to me. The moment of silence had been something rare—like an old Grecian

vase wonderfully wrought. Then, suddenly, the singing fell upon us and broke the silence into ruins. It was in the nature of a breach of the peace. There are two kinds of people who ought to be gently but firmly restrained: the person that talks too much and the person that sings too much.

"This young minister undoubtedly meant well. He's about the kind of a chap that I've seen in law-offices working for fifteen dollars a week—industrious, zealous, and able up to a point, and all right under supervision. He can be trusted to handle a small case with intelligence and judgment. But I wouldn't go to him for instruction in philosophy; and if I wished to relay the foundation of my life I should, naturally, consult some other person. As one might expect, he had searched the cellars of theology for canned goods, and with extraordinary success.

"The young man had so lately arrived in this world he couldn't be expected to

know much about its affairs, and especially about those of Samuel. It was graceful and decorous elocution. The Deacon expressed his opinion of it in snores, and I longed to follow suit.

"The sermon ended with a dramatic recitation, and on our way out the minister met us at the door.

"'You must manage to keep these people awake,' I suggested to him.

"'How am I to do it?' he asked.

"'Well, you might have a corps of pin-stickers carefully distributed in the pews, or you could put the pins in your sermon. I recommend the latter.'

"We went away with a sense of injury.

"'Let's keep trying,' said Betsey, 'until you find some one you would care to hear. I would feel at home in any of our churches. These days there's no essential difference between Congregationalists, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians.

I've talked with all of them, and their differences are dead and gone. They stand in the printed creeds, but are no longer in the hearts of the people.'

"'Then why all these empty churches?' I asked. 'Why don't the people get together in one great church?'

"'Don't talk about the millennium,' said Betsey. 'We must try to make the best of what we have.'

"Well, in the next four Sundays we went from church to church to get strength for our souls, and found only weakness and disappointment. Immune from ridicule and satire, the sacred inefficiency of our pulpit had waxed and grown and taken possession of the churches. And one thought came to me as I listened. There should be a number of exits to every Christian church, plainly marked: 'To be used in case of fire.' Ancient history, dead philosophy, sophomoric periods, bad music, empty pews, weary groups of the faithful longing for home,

were, in brief, the things that we saw and heard. It was pathetic.

"I began to think about it. Here were five church organizations, all weak, infirm, begging, struggling for life. The automobile and the golf and yacht clubs had nearly finished the work of destruction which incompetence had so ably begun. There was not much left of them; yet their combined property was worth about one hundred thousand dollars. They spent in the aggregate fifty-six hundred dollars for ministers' salaries, and their total average attendance was only four hundred and forty-nine. I could see no more extravagant waste of time, work, and capital in any other branch of human effort. Some would call it wicked, but, though we speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, we had better have kept still.

"The Reverend Mr. Knowles came to me within a day or two and apologized for his sermon. He complained that he

couldn't be himself—that he didn't dare speak his thoughts.

"'Whose thoughts do you speak?' I asked.

"'Well, I trail along in the wake of the fathers.'

"'Then you are feeding your flock on corned and kippered thoughts—on the dried and dug-up convictions of the dead. It isn't fair. It isn't even honest. The church here is dying of anemia for want of fresh food. The new world must have new thought to fit new conditions. Its outlook has been utterly changed. If a man who had never seen a locomotive or a motor-car or a tandem or a telephone or an electric light or the sons and daughters of a new millionaire or the home and crest of the same or a bill of a modern merchant were to come down out of the backwoods and try to tell us how to run the world, we should think him an ass, and wisely. Consider how these things have changed the

spirit of man and surrounded it with new perils.'

"'But think of the old fellows—the moss-backs—who hate your new philosophy,' said the minister.

"'And think of the young fellows who are so easily tossed about. The moss of senility is covering the bloom of youth and the honor of youth.'"

XV

IN WHICH HARRY RETURNS TO POINTVIEW AND GOES TO WORK

"BETSEY and I were giving a dinner-party at our house. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Delance and the Warburtons and Dan and Lizzie had come over to discuss a plan for the correction of the greatest folly and extravagance in the village—namely, the waste of its spiritual energy.

"At first we had to discuss a fact related to another folly, for the Delances told how Harry's pet collie had come up to the back door that day with a human skull in his mouth. Of course I knew that Harry's Bishop had returned, but held my peace about it. To them it had suggested murder, and they had consulted the chief of police.

"HARRY'S PET COLLIE HAD COME UP TO THE BACK DOOR WITH A HUMAN SKULL IN HIS MOUTH"

"'How do you know that it is not one of your ancestors dug up in a back pasture,' I said.

"'It might be William the Conqueror,' Lizzie remarked.

"'I deny it,' said Delance, in perfect good nature. 'We have resigned from William's family. As a matter of fact, I never joined it.'

"I congratulated him.

"'It has always seemed like the merest poppycock to me—this genealogical craze of the ladies,' said Henry. 'When our London solicitor wrote that it would take another hundred pounds to establish the connection beyond a doubt, he gave away the whole scheme, and I resigned. It was too siily. In these days of titled chambermaids I think we shall worry along pretty well without William.'

"Then Betsey said: 'I was reading in the county history to-day that old Zebulon Delance, who was killed in a fight with

Indians in 1750, was buried in a meadow back of his house.'

"'It may be the skull of old Zeb,' said Henry.

"'Now there's an ancestor worth having,' I suggested.

"'I wonder if it can belong to old Zeb,' Henry mused.

"At last we got to my plan. I pictured the condition of the community as I saw it, and the inefficiency of the church and the need of a new and active power in Pointview.

"I proposed that we buy the old skating-rink and remodel it, employ the best talent in America, and start a new center of power in the community—a power that should, first of all, keep us sane, and then as decent as possible. The mathematics of the enterprise were at my fingers' ends:

"Initial Expenses	$15,000
"Annual Outlay for Instruction	8,000
"For Music	3,500
"For Maintenance	1,000
"For Management	3,500

"It was no small matter, but the initial expense and the first year's outlay were subscribed in ten minutes. Betsey set the ball rolling with an offer of ten thousand dollars, and then it was like shaking ripe apples off a tree.

"'Who is to be the manager?' Delance wanted to know. 'It's a big job.'

"'I propose that we try Harry,' I said; 'in my opinion it will interest him. I've had him in training for a year or so, and he's about ready for big work.'

"'I don't believe Harry can do it,' his father declared.

"'I should think it might not be to his taste,' said Bill Warburton.

"'But I have later and better information than the rest of you,' I said. 'If you will leave the matter in my hands you may hold me responsible for the results.'

"They gave me the white card. I could do as I liked. The fact is, I had just had a letter from Harry which filled me with new hope. I have it here."

The Honorable Socrates Potter took the letter from his pocket and said:

"You see, Harry has been discovering America. He is the Columbus of our heiristocracy. His mental map has been filled with great cities and splendid hotels, and thrifty towns and enormous areas of wheat and corn, and astonishing distances and sublime mountain scenes. Moreover, he has learned the joys of a simple life; he had to. Of course, he knew of these things, but feebly and without pride, as one knows the Tetons who has never seen them. Leaving in May, he stopped in all the big cities, and finished his journey from the railroad with a stage-ride of some ninety miles. Of the stage-ride and other matters, he writes thus:

"'On the front seat with the driver sat a lady smoking a cigar, who, now and then, offered us a drink from a bottle. At her side was a lady with a wooden leg, and a hen in her hand. You know every woman is a

lady out here. The driver swore at the horses, the hen swore at the lady, and several of the passengers swore at each other, and it was all done in the most amiable spirit. Two rough-necks sat beside me who kept shooting with revolvers at sage-hens as they—the men, not the hens—irrigated the tires with tobacco-juice. At the next stop I got into a row with a one-eyed professor of elocution, because he said I carried too much for the size of my mule, an' didn't speak proper. He objected to my pronunciation, and I to his choice of words. In the argument his revolver took sides with him. I got one of my toes lopped with a bullet, and the lady who carried the cigar and the bottle took me to her home and nursed me like a mother, and the lady with the wooden leg brought me strawberries every day and sang to me and told me some good stories. I had thought it was a God-forsaken country, but, you see, I was wrong. There's more real

practical Christianity among these people than I ever saw before, and it's hard work to be an ass here. The way of the ass is full of trouble, and I begin to understand why you wanted me to come out to Wyoming. The people are rough, but as kind as angels. Felt like turning back, but these women put new heart in me, especially the wooden-legged one.

"'"We don't like parlor talk out here," she said; "it ain't considered good ettikit. Folks don't mind a little, but if it goes too fur it's considered insultin' an' everybody begins to speak to ye like he was talkin' to a balky mule."

"'I went on as soon as I was able, and spent the whole summer on the back of a cayuse. Got lost in the mountains; went hungry and cold like the wolf, as Garland puts it, for three days; had to think my way back to camp. It was the best schooling in geography and logic and American humanity that I ever had. Every man at

the ranch, and the women, had been out hunting for me. I offered them money, but they woudn't take a cent—the joy of seeing me was enough. They haven't a smitch of the revolting money-hunger of the average European. With all its faults I am proud of my country. I want you to find a good, big American job for me.

"'I have been reading the Bishop of St. Clare, who says: "There hath been more energy expended in swaggering about with full bellies and a burden of needless fat than would move the island to the main shore. If thy purse be used to buy immunity from work, it secureth immunity from manhood; and what is a man without manhood?"

"'There is the American idea for you.

"'Deacon Joe has got to change his mind about me. Marie has only written me one letter, and that was a frost. If you have any influence with the girl, don't let her get engaged to that parson.'

Socrates laughed as he put the letter away, and went on:

"Well, Harry came back, browned and brawny, with his cayuse, saddle, and sombrero, and a shooting-iron half as long as my arm.

"He came here for a talk with me the day after his arrival. The subject of a life-work was pressing on him.

"'Have you seen Zeb?' was his first query.

"'Zeb?' I asked. 'Who is Zeb?'

"'That dear old, irrepressible bishop,' said Harry. 'They have dug him up and named him Zeb, and put him on a top shelf in the library. They think he is one of our great-grandfathers.'

"'Oh, he has been promoted,' I remarked.

"Harry went on:

"'My dog is responsible for the reappearance of the bishop. I took him with me that night, and he knew where to find

it. Father is sure that it's the head of old Zeb Delance.'

"'Let the Bishop rest where he is,' I suggested. 'Now that he has converted you, he will probably let up. At least, let us hope that he will not worry you. Of course he will remind you of past follies every time you look at him, but that will do you no harm.'

"'Oh, I couldn't forget him! Father has been reading up on Zeb, and he does nothing but talk about him. He has learned that the Indians buried the head and burned the body of a victim.'

"'He symbolizes the change in your taste. Zeb was a man of action—a worker. What do you propose to do now?'

"'Well, I have thought some of following Dan into agriculture.'

"'Don't,' was my answer. 'You're not the type for that kind of a job. Dan was brought up to work with his hands. I fear that you would be a Fifth Avenue farmer.'

"'Well, what would you say to a plant for the manufacture of aeroplanes? I stopped at Dayton and looked into the matter, and learned to fly. I have ordered a biplane, and it will be delivered in the spring.'

"I vetoed that plan, and asked where he proposed to settle.

"'Right here—if possible,' said Harry.

"'Good! There's one thing about your family tree that I like, and you ought to be proud of it. Your forebears, having been treated with shameless oppression, came to these inhospitable shores in 1630. They needn't have done it if they had been willing to knuckle down and say they liked crow when they didn't. They wouldn't do that, so they left the old sod and ventured forth in a little sailing-vessel on the mighty deep. It required some courage to do that. They landed safely, and for nearly three hundred years their descendants have lived and worked and suffered all manner of hard-

ships in New England. It's a proper thing, Harry, that you should do your work where, mostly, they did their work—in dear old Connecticut.'

"'And besides, it's the home of Marie,' he said.

"'And let us consider what there is to be done in the home of Marie,' I went on. 'Here in the very town where so many of your fathers have lived and worked we find a singular parade of folly. The idle rich from a near city are closing in upon us. Many of the Yankees have acquired property and ceased to work. Back in the distant hills they toil not, but live from hand to mouth in a pitiful state of degeneration. The work of the hand is almost entirely that of Italians, Poles, Hungarians, and Greeks.

"'Our tradesmen have a low code of honor. They overcharge us for the necessities of life. Many of them have been caught cheating. Our wives and sons and

daughters are living beyond their means, as if ignorant of the fact that it is the beginning of dishonesty. Our poverty is mostly that of the soul. The churches are dying, and the sabbath is dead. What we need is a return to the honor, sanity, and common sense of old New England, which gave of its fullness to the land we love. Let's start a school of old-fashioned decency and Americanism. Let's call it the Church of All Faiths and make it a center of power.'

"I laid the scheme before him in all its details, and then—

"'I'm with you,' he said, 'and I think I can see Knowles moving and Deacon Joe coming down off his high horse.'

"'Possibly we could use Knowles,' I suggested. 'There'll be a lot of detail.'

"'But only as a kind of clerk,' said Harry.

"As a kind of clerk, I agreed. 'We shall need a number of clerks. I intend that every family within ten miles shall be visited at least once a week. We shall not

only let our light shine, but we shall make it shine into every human heart in this community. If they're too callous we'll punch a hole with our trusty blade and let the light in. The lantern and the rapier shall be our weapons.'

"Harry was full of enthusiasm. He had met Marie on the street, and she was glad to learn that he was going to work.

"'Incidentally, I hope to win your grandfather's consent,' he had said to her.

"And she had answered: 'If you could do that I should think you were an extremely able young man.'

"'And worthy of the best girl living?' Harry had urged.

"'That's too extravagant,' Marie had said as she left him.

"Harry went to work with me at once. He bought the rink and the ground beneath it and some more alongside. We spent days and nights with an architect making and remaking the plans, and by and by

we knew that we were right. Soon the contractor began his work, and in three months we had finished the most notable meeting-house of modern times.

"The walls were tinted a rich cream color, the woodwork was painted white. There were new carpets in the aisles, and between them comfortable seats for nine hundred people. The fine old pulpit from which Jonathan Edwards had preached his first sermon was the center of a little garden of ferns and palms and vines and mosses, all growing in good ground, with a small fountain in their midst—a symbol of purity. A great sheet of plate glass behind the pulpit showed a thicket of evergreens. High above the pulpit was another big sheet of glass, through which one got a broad view of the sky, and it was framed in these words: 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork.'

"The walls were adorned with handsome

pictures loaned by my friends. On one wall were these modern commandments, most of which were gleaned from the masterly volume entitled *The Life and Writings of Robert Delance, Bishop of St. Clare*, which Harry had found in a London bookstore:

"1. 'Be grateful unto God, for He hath given thee life, time, and this beautiful world. Other things thou shalt find for thyself.'

"2. 'Be brave with thy life, for it is very long.'

"3. 'Waste no time, for thy time is very little.'

"4. 'See that this world is the better for thy work and kindness.'

"5. 'Doubt not the truth of that thy senses tell thee, for thy God is no deceiver.'

"6. 'Love the truth and live it, for no one is long deceived by lying.'

"7. 'Give not unto the beast and neglect thy brother.'

"8. 'Go find thy brothers in the world and see that these be many, for a man's strength and happiness are multiplied by the number of his brothers.'

"9. 'Beware lest thy wealth come between thee and them and tend to thine own poverty and theirs.'

"10. 'Suffer little children to come unto thee, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'

"The simple-hearted old Bishop had just the philosophy we needed. It seemed to have been carefully designed to meet the inventiveness of the modern sinner. He was turning out well and had already exerted a wholesome influence on the character of Harry. Would that all ancestors were as well chosen!

"We did not wish to hinder the other churches, and that spirit went into all our plans. First, then, we decided that our services should begin at twelve o'clock every Sunday, and close at one or before twenty minutes after one. That gave our

parishioners a chance to go to the other churches if they wanted to. I traveled from Boston to St. Louis, and returned *via* Washington, to engage talent for our pulpit. I wanted the best that this land afforded, and was prepared to pay its price. I engaged nine ministers, distinguished for eloquence and learning, three Governors, the Mayor of a Western city, two United States Senators, one Congressman, and a Justice of the Supreme Court of the land. They were all great-souled men, who had shown in word and action a touch of the spirit of Jesus Christ. Some of them had been throwing light into dark places and driving money-changers from the temple and casting out devils. They were all qualified to enlighten and lift up our souls.

"I asked that their lessons should be drawn from the lives of the modern prophets —Abraham Lincoln, Silas Wright, Daniel Webster, Charles Sumner, Henry Clay, Noah Webster, George William Curtis,

Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sidney Lanier, Horace Greeley, and others like them. What I sought most was an increase of the love of honor and the respect for industry in our young men and women. Holiness was a thing for later consideration, it seemed to me.

"I put a full-page advertisement in each local paper, which read about as follows:

"'The Church of All Faiths.

"'Built especially for sinners and for good people who wish to be better.

"'Will begin its work in this community Sunday, June 19th, at twelve o'clock, with a sermon by Socrates Potter, Esq., of Pointview, in which he will set forth his view of what a church should do, and an account of what this church proposes to do, for its parishioners. Other churches are cordially invited to worship, and to work with us for the good of Pointview.'

"The curiosity of all the people had been whetted to a keen edge. They had begged

for information, but Betsey and I had said that they should know all about it in due time. I had given my plan to the contributors only, and they were to keep still about it.

"Sometimes silence is the best advertisement, and certain men who seem to be so modest that they are shocked by the least publicity are the greatest advertisers in the world. The man who hides his candle under a bushel is apt to be the one whose candle is best known. So it happened with us. Nine hundred and sixteen people filled the seats in our church that morning by twelve o'clock, and two hundred more were trying to get in.

"At the next service an honored minister whose soul is even greater than his fame preached for us, and that week a petition came to me, signed by six hundred citizens, complaining that the hour was inconvenient, and asking that it be changed to 10.30 A.M. I believe in the voice of the people,

and obeyed it; but I knew what would happen, and it did. The other churches were deserted and silent. One by one their ministers came to see me—all save one old gentleman in whom the brimstone of wrath had begun to burn more fiercely. We needed and were glad to have the help of two of them. There were the sick and the poor to be visited; there were weddings and funerals and countless details in the organization of the new church to be attended to.

"I ought to tell you that a curious and unexpected thing had happened. Fisherfolk, street gamins, caddies, loafers on the docks and in the livery stables, millionaires and million-heiresses—people who had thought themselves either above or below religion—came to our meetings. Each resembled in numbers a political rally.

"We have started an improvement school for Sunday evenings, in which the great story is told in lectures and fine photo-

graphs thrown on a screen. And not only the great story, but any story calculated to inspire and enlighten the youthful mind. The best of the world's work and art and certain of the great novels will be presented in this way. I am going to get the great men of the world to give us three-minute sermons on the phonograph. Thus I hope to make it possible for our people to hear the voices and sentiments of kings, presidents, premiers, statesmen, and prophets—the men and women who are making history.

"We have started a small country club where poor boys and girls can enjoy billiards, bowling, golf, and tennis. Any boy or girl in this town who has a longing for better things is sought and found by our ministers, and all kinds of encouragement are offered. People and clergy of almost every faith that is known here in Pointview are working side by side for one purpose. Think of that! The revolution has been

complete and mainly peaceful. As to the expense of it all, we tax the rich, and for the rest we temper the wind to the length of their wool.

"Of course, there were certain people who didn't like it, and among them was Deacon Joe. He and four others hired a minister, and sat in lonely sorrow in the old church every Sunday, until the expense sickened them. Then the Deacon got mad at the town, and refused to be seen in it.

"'Reach everybody,' had been one of our mottoes, and Deacon Joe said that he guessed we wouldn't reach him."

XVI

WHICH PRESENTS AN INCIDENT IN OUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST NEW NEW ENGLAND

"WE had some adventures in new New England which ought to be set down. Here's one of them.

"The old village of Trent lies back in the hills, a little journey from Pointview, on the shores of a pleasant river. To the unknowing traveler, who approaches from either hilltop, it has a peaceful and inviting look. But the rutted, rocky road begins at once to excite suspicion. A bad road is an indication and a producer of degeneracy in man and beast. It tends to profanity, and if it went far would probably lead to hell. Trent itself is one of the little

modern hells of New England. There are the venerable and neatly fashioned houses of the old-time Yankee—the peaked roofs and gables, the columns, the cozy verandas, the garden spaces. But the old-time Yankees are gone. The well-kept gardens are no more. Many of the houses are going to ruin. One is an Italian tenement. The others are inhabited by coachmen, chauffeurs, gardeners, mill-hands, and degenerate Yankees. The inn is a mere barroom. Sounds of revelry and the odor of stale beer come out of it. In front are teams of burden, abandoned, for a time, by their drivers, and sundry human signs of decay loafing in the shadow of the old lindens. Among them are the seedy remnants of a once noble race. They are fettered by 'rheumatiz' and the disordered liver. They move like boats dragging their anchors. To make life tolerable their imaginations need assistance. They are like the Flub Dubs of lost Atlantis. Each

imagines himself the greatest man in the village. They talk in loud words. They quarrel and fight over the crown. So it has been a brawling, besotted community.

"Trent's leading citizen is a Yankee politician who owns most of its real estate and derives a profit from its lawless traffic. Trent has been his enterprise.

"Knowles went over there one day to conduct a funeral, which was interrupted by a dog-fight under the coffin and nearly broken up by a row over two dollars which had been found in a pocket of the dead man.

"We opened a club-house next to the hotel, and began a campaign for the regeneration of Trent. Soon we discovered that its one officer was unwilling to arrest offenders against law and order. We had him removed and a new man put in his place. This man was set upon and severely beaten, and lost interest in the good work. Then Harry applied for the job and got it. He took with him a force of husky young

men—mostly college boys. The first day on duty he arrested in the street a drunken man who carried in his hands a small sack of potatoes. The latter whistled for help, and the enemies of law and order swarmed out of their haunts. Harry had become an expert ball pitcher, noted for speed and accuracy. He floored his man and took possession of the potatoes, with which he proceeded to defend himself. Only two balls were pitched, but they held the enemy in check until Harry's deputies had rushed out of the club-house. A flying wedge scattered the crowd. No further violence was needed. The ruffians saw that he meant business and had the nerve and muscle to carry it through, and nothing more was necessary—just then.

"They took the drunken man to the lock-up, and came back and got a bartender, and led him in the same path. Harry has the situation well in hand, and is the most popular man in our community.

Every day we have items to put to his credit, and nothing to charge against his reputation. There's something going on at the club every evening, and the rooms are crowded. Those men who had sat day by day brawling under the lindens now spend most of their leisure in the reading and card rooms. Peace reigns in Trent. Such is the power of united benevolence working with the strong hand and the courageous spirit."

XVII

WHICH PRESENTS A DECISIVE INCIDENT IN OUR CAMPAIGN AGAINST OLD NEW ENGLAND

"HARRY was pretty well disabled with affection for a time. He was like a Yankee with the 'rheumatiz,' and you know when a Yankee gets hold of the 'rheumatiz' he hangs on. It don't often get away from him. It becomes an asset —a conservational asset—an ever-present help in time of haying.

"Since Harry's return the tactics of Marie had been faultless. Her eyes had said, 'Come on,' while her words had firmly held him off. He shook the tree every time they met, but the squirrel wouldn't come down.

"It was a hard part for Marie to play, between the pressure of two handsome boys and her duty to grandpapa. The Reverend Robert had won the favor of the old gentleman by turning from tennis to agriculture for exercise. He had gone over to the Benson farm and helped with the spring's work; he had supper there every Sunday evening, after which he conducted a little service for the Deacon's benefit. He was pressing, as they say in golf, and it didn't improve his game. I saw that Marie was not quite so fond of him. I had maintained an attitude of strict neutrality, but could not fail to observe that Marie had begun to lean.

"'You have captured the rest of Pointview, and you ought to be able to take Benson's Hill,' Marie had said to Harry. 'Grandfather is the last enemy of your crusade.'

"It was a timely touch on the accelerator, and Harry began to speed up a little.

"'The farm is so well defended, and there's nothing I dread so much as a hickory cane,' the boy had answered. 'The last visit I made to the farm I wondered whether I was going to convert him to my way of thinking, or he was going to convert me to jelly.'

"Indeed, Deacon Joe stood firm as a mountain. People were saying that the minister would win in a walk, when Marie converted her grandfather by the most remarkable bit of woman's strategy that I ever observed. It was Napoleonic.

"One day in May, Harry came, much excited, to my office. Deacon Joe was about to move to his island, a mile or so off shore. He was going to take Marie with him for an indefinite period. No boat would be permitted to land there except his own and the Reverend Robert's. Marie would be a sort of prisoner. That day she had told him of the plan of her grandfather. In Harry's opinion Knowles had suggested it.

"'Where is the girl's mother?' I asked.

"'On some Cook's tour in Europe, and the old man is crazy as a March hare,' said my young friend. 'He's got a lot of bull-dogs over there, and his hired men have been instructed to shoot a hole in any boat that comes near.'

"I went over to the Benson homestead that afternoon, and found Deacon Joe sitting on the piazza.'

"'How are you?' I asked.

"'Not very stout,' said he; 'heart flutters like a ketched bird.'

"'What are you doing for it?'

"'Doctor give me some medicine; I fergit the name of it, but it is the stuff they use to blow up safes with.'

"'Nitroglycerin! The very thing! I hope they will succeed in blowing up your safe.'

"I was pretty close to the old man, and was always very frank with him. He liked opposition, and was as fond of warfare as an Old Testament hero.

"'What, sir?' he asked.

"'There are some folks that have got to be blowed up before you can get an old idea out of their heads,' I went on. 'They are locked up with rust. That's what's the matter with you, Deacon. Your brain needs to be blowed open an' aired. You stored it full of ideas sixty years ago and locked the door for fear they'd get away. They should have been taken out and sorted over at least once a year, and some thrown into the fire to make room for better ones. If life does you any good, if it really teaches you anything, your brain must keep changing its contents.'

"The Deacon hammered the table with his cane, as he shouted:

"'You cussed fool of a lawyer! Don't you know that truth never changes? Truth, sir, is eternal.'

"Then I took the bat. 'Truth often changes, but error is eternal,' I said. 'You know when you want to prove anything,

these days, you quote from the memoirs of a great man. Well, I was reading the memoirs of the late Doctor Godfrey Vogeldam Guph not long ago. He told of a man who was very singular, but not so singular as the doctor seemed to think. This man knew more than any human being has a right to know. He knew the plans of God, and had formed an unalterable opinion about all his neighbors. Then he locked up his mind and guarded it night and day, for fear that somebody would break in and carry off its contents. And it did seem as if people wanted to get hold of his treasure, for they often came and asked about it, and some even questioned its value. He said, "Away with you—truth is eternal, and my soul is full and I will part with none of it."

"'Meanwhile the truth about things around him began to change. Neighbor Smith became a good man. Neighbor Brown became a bad man. Priscilla

Jones, who had been a vain and foolish woman, was one of the saints of God. The foundations of the world had changed. In a generation it had grown millions of years older and different—wonderfully different! Even God himself had changed, it would seem. His methods were not as people had thought them. His character was milder. Everything had changed but this one man. Now when he died and came to St. Peter, the latter said to him:

"'"Who were your friends?"

"'The new-comer thought a minute, and mentioned the names of some people who had been long dead. "They know the truth about me," he said.

"'"Ah, but the truth changes, and they haven't seen you in many years," said St. Peter.

"'"But I have not changed," said the man. "I am just as when they saw me."

"'"Then you are a fool or the chief of sinners," said St. Peter. "Behold a man

as changeless as the flint-stone, who has made no friends in over forty years! That is all I need to know about you. Take either gate you please."

"'"One leads to Heaven—doesn't it?" said the new-comer, in great alarm.

"'"Yes, but you wouldn't recognize the place. There isn't a soul in paradise that cares which way you go—not a soul in all its multitude that will be glad to see you. They have better company. Stranger! go which way you please, Heaven will be as uncomfortable as hell."

"Deacon Joe gave me close attention, and I saw that my sword had nicked him a little. Anything that affected his hope of Paradise was sure to engage his thought. He shook his head, and said that he didn't believe it. But he couldn't fool me. I knew that the seed of change had struck into him.

"I gave him another thrust. 'Deacon, you knew Harry Delance when he was a

fool. But the truth about *him* has changed. He is now a hard-working, level-headed young fellow, and you ought to be his friend.'

"'Wal, I like the way he cuffed them fellers over at Trent,' said the Deacon. 'He pounded 'em noble—that's sartin. Mebbe if he licks a few more men I'll begin to like him.'

"'Give him a chance,' was my answer. 'I hear that you are going to move for the summer.'

"'Goin' to my island to-morrow,' said Deacon Joe. 'I'm sick of the autymobiles an' the young spendthrifts hangin' around Marie, an' her extravagance, an' the new church nonsense, an' the other goin's-on. I've got a good house there, an' Marie an' I are goin' to rest an' stroll around without bein' run over until her mother comes back. The only trouble I have there is the hired men. They rob me right an' left. I wish somebody would lick them.'

"'You really need a young man like Harry,' I urged. 'And Marie needs him. She'll be lonely over there.'

"'Not a bit,' said the Deacon. 'She'll have a saddle-horse, and young Knowles can come over once a week, if he wants to. I hear he's done splendid lately.'

"'He's doing well, but I am inclined to think that Harry is the better man,' I said, taking sides for the first time.

"'I don't believe it,' was the answer of Deacon Joe. 'Knowles is getting pretty sensible, and his voice is stronger.'

"'The Deacon moved next day, and when Sunday came I went over in a boat with the Reverend Robert at eight o'clock in the morning. I was taking a stroll on the beach when I met him, and he asked me to go along. It was just a social call, he explained. Incidentally, he was going to pray and read a Scripture lesson at the Deacon's request. As we left the dock, Harry came riding by on one of his thorough-

breds, and I waved my hand to him. When we got to the Deacon's landing, I said to Robert:

"'As I am not invited, perhaps you had better announce me to Deacon Joe, while I stay here in the boat.'

"'All right,' he said, as he gaily jumped ashore and tied the painter rope.

"Robert hurried in the direction of the little house, and had covered half the distance, when a bulldog came sneaking toward him. Robert saw the dog, and ran for a tree. He was making handsome progress up the trunk of the tree when the dog reached him, and, seizing a leg of his trousers, began to surge backward. The cloth parted at the knee, and between the pulling of man and dog, Robert lost about all the lower end of one trousers-leg. The hired man came running out with some more dogs, and said:

"'It's all right, Mr. Knowles, you can come down. I hope he didn't hurt you.'

"'Excuse me,' said the young man, 'but I think I'll stay here a while.'

"Three dogs stood at the foot of the tree looking anxiously upward.

"'They won't hurt you while I'm here,' said the hired man.

"'I won't take any chances,' said Robert. 'Go shut up your lions, and I'll come down.'

"'Who's that in the boat?' the hired man asked.

"'Mr. Potter,' said Robert.

"'Well, he mustn't land 'less the old man says so—I don't care who he is.'

"Just then the hired man changed his position suddenly, and stood looking into the sky. I turned and saw an aeroplane coming down like some great bird from the hills, behind the village. It sailed high above the spires, and coasted down to a level some fifty feet above the water-plane between shore and island. In a minute or so it roared over me, circled the point, and came down in the open field that faced

the Deacon's cottage. Dogs and chickens flew and ran in great confusion as it swooped to earth. I knew that Harry and his new flier had reached the island of Deacon Joe, and I hurried ashore to see—well, 'to see what I could see,' as the old song has it. Harry jumped from his seat. The hired man ran toward him. Deacon Joe and Marie and a woman-servant hurried out-of-doors.

"In less time than it takes to tell it, Harry had licked the hired man, and kicked two dogs in the belly till they ran for life, and shot another one, and was chasing a second hired man around the wood-shed. Not being able to run fast enough to do further damage, Harry came to the astonished group in front of the house and caught Marie in his arms and kissed her.

"Then he turned to the Deacon, and said: 'Sir, I will keep off your island if you wish, but I do not propose to be bluffed when I come to pay my compliments to you and Marie.'

"HE LOOKED LIKE A MAN WITH A WOODEN LEG"

"Deacon Joe was dumb with astonishment. The young minister came down out of his tree and walked slowly toward the group, with rags flapping over one extremity of his union-suit. He looked like a man with a wooden leg.

"'How did ye get here?' Deacon Joe demanded of Harry.

"'Jumped from the top of Delance's Hill and landed right here,' said the latter.

"'In that awful-lookin' thing?' the Deacon asked, pointing with his cane and squinting at the big biplane.

"'In that thing,' Harry answered.

"'How long did it take ye?'

"'About five minutes.'

"'It's impossible,' said the Deacon, as he approached the biplane and began to look at it.

"'But you'll see me jump back again in a little while,' Harry assured him.

"'Geehanniker!' the Deacon exclaimed. 'Jumped from the top of Delance's Hill an'

licked my caretaker an' chased a hired man an' sp'ilt two dogs an' treed the minister and kissed the lady o' the house—all in about ten minutes. I guess you're a good deal of a feller.'

"It was the kind of thing that warmed the warrior soul of the Deacon.

"'Hello—here's a dead dog,' said Harry. 'If you'll have one of the men bring me a shovel I'll bury him there in the garden. Meanwhile you may tell me how much I owe you for the two dogs.'

"'I guess about twenty-five dollars,' said the Deacon.

"'How much off for cash?' Harry asked.

"'Wal, sir, if you ain't goin' to ask me to charge it, ten dollars would do,' the Deacon allowed.

"'There's a wonderful power in cash,' said Harry, as he produced the money.

"'You're gettin' some sense in your head,' said the Deacon.

"The shovel was brought; and Harry,

who had expected to shoot a dog or two and had been practising for this very act, put his victim under three feet of soil in as many minutes. That also pleased the Deacon.

"'Purty cordy, too,' the latter said, as he turned to Marie. 'Now, girl, take your choice. I want to know which is which, an' stop bein' bothered about it.'

"She made her choice then and there, and as to which of the two it may have been you will have no doubt when I tell you that Marie had planned every detail in this bit of strategy and Harry had been man enough to put it through.

"'You know Zeb's commandment has been a help to me,' he said, when I offered congratulations. '"Be brave with your life, for it is very long."'

"The Deacon has changed. His heart and mind are open. Every Sunday you may see him in a front seat, drinking at the new fount of inspiration; and it is a rule of

his life to make a new friend every day. I'm inclined to think that the old man has been saved at last.

"Yes, we try to reach everybody in one way or another."

THE END